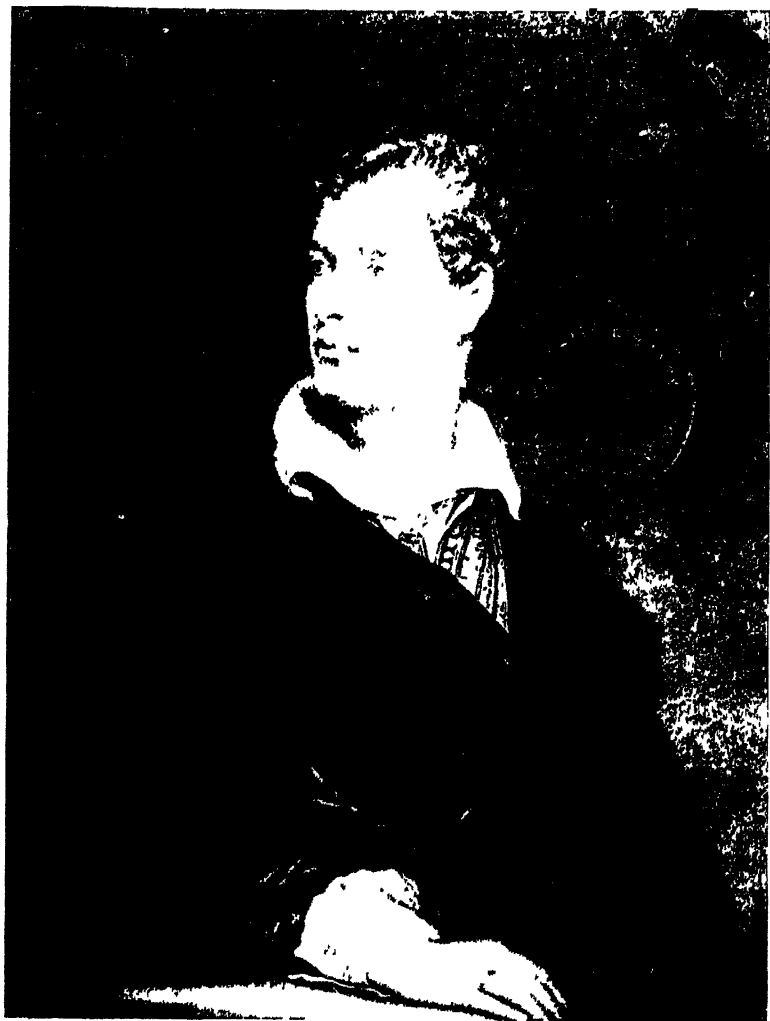


ALLEGRA



LORD BYRON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY J. LUTTON AFTER THE PAINTING BY THOMAS PHILLIPS IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

A decorative border of repeating floral and vine motifs surrounds the text.

# ALLEGRA

THE STORY OF  
BYRON AND MISS CLAIRMONT

By  
ARMISTEAD C. GORDON

WITH EIGHT PORTRAITS.

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## THE FIRST PART

### *Newstead Abbey and Gight Castle*

“There is no house that suddenly produces  
Monster or demi-god; but from succession  
Of evil men or good there issues forth  
Some birth of horror, or some great world’s joy.”

GOETHE: *Iphigenia in Tauris.*  
(Mrs. Dowden’s Translation)

# ALLEGRA

## I

### LEGEND

**B**YRON'S mother, when he was six years old, said in one of her rages with him, for which he states he "often gave her cause enough":

"Ah, you little dog, you are a Byron all over; you are as bad as your father!"

If she meant by this passionate reprobation of her exasperating offspring to extol the virtues of the strain that he got from her forbears, she would have done the Byrons a rank injustice. Her denunciation was really intended as a condemnation of both the boy and his father, with whom she was still desperately in love in spite of his outrageous treatment of her.

In this opinion of Captain John Byron, known to the social circles in which he moved as "Mad Jack," his son in later life concurred. He told Captain Medwin, in one of those confidences of his mature manhood which he was accustomed to bestow impartially on whoever cared to accept them, that his father squandered three fortunes and married or ran away with three women and that "Captain Jack" seemed born for his own ruin and that of the other sex. He began

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by seducing Lady Carmarthen, whom he afterwards wedd<sup>d</sup>, and spent for her four thousand pounds a year; and not content with this adventure he later eloped with Miss Gordon. "This marriage," Byron continued, "was not destined to be a very fortunate one either, and I don't wonder at her differing from Sheridan's widow in the play; they certainly could not have claimed 'the slich.'" However, when he came to learn the true story of the Gordons of Gight that was so constantly illustrated in his mother's violent treatment of him, he could not agree that he was "a Byron all over." She had shown him by persistent precept and repeated example that he had the inherited Gight devil.

Newstead Abbey had two groups of figures on the old panels which gave Byron the pleasing idea that his paternal forbears had been crusaders. They were nothing but allegorical memorials of the monks who had dwelt there. One consisted of a woman and two oriental men with eyes fixed upon her; the other contained an occidental female between a turbaned Eastern figure and a Christian soldier. The monks were not indifferent to depictions of feminine beauty forbidden them in the flesh. A correct interpretation of these illuminations is that the one group represented the story of Susannah and the Elders, and the other the Saracen and the Christian warrior contending for the liberation of the Church. The Abbey did not come into the possession of the Byrons until many generations after the Crusades.

The crusading business that he was accustomed to vaunt was purely legendary and poetical; and the stories of Erneis and Ralph Buron, who came with the Norman, though hugged to his heart by the poet, were hardly less apocryphal. The

Buxons became Byrons in the time of Henry II, but their history, like themselves, is commonplace except for their landed possessions, until the time of Charles I, when they blossomed out as one of the picturesque families of that era of good knights falling in bad causes.

They had some small military distinction in the times of the three Edwards, and when Henry V was king. Sir John Byron fought at Bosworth against the hump-backed Richard; and his brother, Sir Nicholas, for an obscure reason, was made a Knight of the Bath in 1501. This knight left a son, Sir John, whom the royal robber and pillager, Henry VIII, created Steward of Manchester and Lieutenant of Sherwood Forest, ancient home of Robin Hood and Little John and Maid Marion. Having despoiled the reverend Abbot and his chapter of the priory of Newstead in the name of God and His holy religion, his sacred Majesty gave and granted them to Sir John; and thenceforward the ancient Abbey buildings, with the lands, messuages, tenements and other hereditaments, thereunto appurtenant and appendant, became the seat of the Byrons, and so continued until the poet, hard pressed for money and with little reverence for his paternal inheritance, sold them in the early part of the nineteenth century.

There were various other knights and lords of Newstead, one of whom served with some distinction in the wars of the Netherlands; another who fought for King Charles at Edgehill; and others who performed various deeds and services that are now pale in the retrospect of history. The first Lord of the family was Sir John, who in 1643 was made Lord Byron of Rochedale. His brother Richard succeeded as sec-

ond Lord; and there were other Lords Byron who were respectable and innocuous, down to the bad Lord William, who is the first of the line to figure conspicuously in the biographies of the poet.

This gentleman of the old school, who was uncle of Captain Jack, the poet's father, was sent to the Tower for killing his kinsman and neighbor, Mr. Chaworth; in an agreed fight at a London club, when they were both drunk and argumentative and quarreled over a matter of which owned the most valuable estates and could shoot the greatest number of birds. If the noble Lord had not pleaded his privilege as a peer in his trial at Westminster Hall for killing Chaworth, he would probably have had the novel experience in the Byron line, though by no means uncommon in that of the Gight Gordons, of dying elsewhere than in his bed.

When he got out of the Tower, his relations, with the characteristic self-consideration of the respectable nobility and landed gentry of the period, looked at him askance and declined his further association; and he spent his remaining years at Newstead in unending turmoil with his tenants and his neighbors, and in exhausting his furious ingenuity in despoiling the property which was to pass in succession to his brother John and his descendants. Here he lived out a long life in retirement, amusing himself with the trivial sports of feeding a swarm of crickets, which he taught to crawl over him and lashed with wisps of straw for their derelictions, and of building toy forts on the banks of the lake and bombarding them with tiny gunboats. He was shunned by the nobility of the county, and the minor gentry seldom called on him. He died, hated by the peasantry, a hard landlord,

a harder master and a morose and sullen head of his family, leaving as a memorial of his character the appellation of "the wicked old Lord Byron." He seems to have been at least one of the poet's predecessors at Newstead who fully deserved the contemptuous epithet which Mrs. Byron conferred on her son.

The bad old Lord was succeeded by his brother John, a naval officer who attracted brief attention by the shipwreck of his vessel on the coast of Chili, about which he wrote a now forgotten book. His fame on land as an author was not so great as the reputation which he achieved among the superstitious sailors, who dubbed him "Foulweather Jack," because he seldom weighed anchor without encountering a storm. When he was fifty years old, and should have known better, he scandalized his friends and acquaintances by setting up an establishment in London for his wife's ex-maid. This performance his handsome and rake-hellish son, Captain Jack, probably regarded as offering himself an example and precedent which he might with safety emulate in a higher social sphere; for he went the sailor one better by running away with the beautiful and bored Marchioness Carmarthen, Baroness Conyers in her own right and daughter-in-law of the fifth Duke of Leeds. Later, Captain Jack, after the fashion of the English gentry of the period, who usually paid the conjugal ladies with whom they eloped the compliment after divorce of marrying them when the scandal had been once sufficiently ventilated, made the Marchioness his wife. She bore him in lawful wedlock one child, the famous Augusta, who became the victim of various poisoned pens, including those of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe and the noble author



of *Astarte*. After two years this first wife of Captain John Byron, who, with the foolish affection for him which his handsome face and fascinating manners inspired in women, had kept him supplied with spending money throughout the time of his evil treatment of her, succumbed to a double dose of vile ill-usage and consumption and departed this life.

## II

### THE STORMY PETRELS

**A**T the age of thirty, Captain John Byron, bankrupt and blasé, in search of a second lady who would supply him with bed, board, and spending money, had his attention drawn to Miss Catharine Gordon of Gight, in the shire of Aberdeen, Scotland. He married her, got the fortune for which he was looking, amounting to some £23,500, squandered it all on himself in two years, and left her at the end of that time with the wretched pittance of £150 per annum wherewith to support herself, occasionally to subsidize his continued excesses, and to maintain and educate their infant son, whose pedigree, as she never failed to impress on the boy, harked back on the one side to the wealthy and aristocratic knights and noble lords of Newstead Abbey and Rochedale, and on the other to the royal line of the Scottish kings and the long-descended Gordons of Huntly and Gight.

The almost innumerable books about Byron touch on his Gight pedigree lightly,—possibly for the reason that the associates of his mature age were English, but more probably because those who wrote about him after his death had no adequate knowledge of the unspeakable ruffianism of these high and mighty Scottish progenitors of the distaff side.

So much of scandal and bad repute, such varied stories

of turbulence and violence have been woven into the controversial annals of his picturesque career, that it is hard to believe his enemies would not have flaunted the Gight history in the face of the world, to his further condemnation, had they known it, even though some biographers might have intentionally omitted the story as one offering excuses for no few of his heralded offenses.

Catharine Gordon, thirteenth and last Laird of Gighi,—and it will be observed that etymological dictionaries define “laird” as “Scots for Lord,—in Scotland a proprietor, a landed gentleman”—came of a family whose pedigrees and papers in ancient charter-chests and old records, public and private, through several hundred years have exhausted the vocabulary of lawlessness and recklessness. Throughout its whole story from first to last runs, like the yellow thread in the Clan plaid, a spirit of revolt against established order and authority such as is hardly to be found in all the annals of the rude and boisterous Scotland of their times.

The first Gordon of Gight was Sir William, son of George Gordon, second Earl of Huntly and his wife, the Princess Annabella Stuart, sister of the Scots king, James II. This earliest Laird fell at Flodden. One son was killed at Pinkie. Three grandsons were murdered. One grandson was executed. One grandson was drowned, and two fell in the Continental wars. Two great-grandsons were murdered. One great-grandson assassinated Wallenstein. One great-grandson died in prison. One great-grand-daughter's husband was poisoned, and another was excommunicated. One great-great-grandson decamped to Germany; another was murdered; a third was executed, and a fourth was killed in Paris. The

eleventh Laird was drowned, as was his son, the twelfth Laird.

The line ended with the unlucky number thirteen, in Byron's mother.

This bald catalogue of crime and tragedy may be illustrated by certain outstanding details. The third Laird's family embroidered the bloody tapestry of the House of Gight with a gorgeous magnificence of dreadful episodes. His second son, John, was executed at Edinburgh in 1592 for murdering "the bonnie Earl of Moray" during the attack on the castle of Donniebristle in Fife. His third son fell in the war in Holland. His fourth son was killed in a duel by the Master of Menteith. His eldest daughter, Margaret, was sent into mourning at Christmas 1576, her brother William having murdered her father's stepfather at Old-Deer; while another daughter, Catharine, who had married John Keith of Clachriach, was made a widow by the same brother William, who assassinated her husband at the Justice Port of Aberdeen. This William Gordon, who became the fifth Laird of Gight, is said by the chronicler of the family's variegated and gruesome annals to have been "as redoubtable a ruffian as the history of Aberdeen can produce."

There was romance and love and adventure mingled with the story of these violent Scots; and lofty bearing, and beauty and charm of face and form in both male and female. The Gights belonged to the high nobility of the kingdom, and they were ready from the beginnings of the House to take part in whatever gave promise of lifting it and them out of the dreary drabness of life. The first Laird was son of the second Earl of Huntly, whose successors have been the hereditary head

of the Clan and still bear the soubriquet of "Cock of the North." This particular "Cock" divorced his wife to marry King James's sister. His eldest son succeeded him. His second son wedded the Countess of Sutherland and founded the line that held the earldom until a time after Lord Byron's death. Of his daughters, Huntly made one Countess Marischal, another Countess of Erroll, and a third might have become Countess of Crawford, if she had not, Gight-fashion, smothered her husband, the Master of Crawford, before he attained the earldom. His youngest daughter, who bore the same name as Byron's mother, is known to history as "The White Rose." Her father gave her in marriage to the adventurer Perkin Warbeck, who aspired to be King of England. The family luck was contagious; and Perkin, having caught it from his wife, was hanged "as a scurril knave" at Tyburn. His widow, who possessed the captivating face and form that were no unusual characteristics of many of the women, as well as men of her blood, found favor at the English Court of Henry III, who treated her not only "with compassion" but affection, for the sake of her unhappy career and "her excellent beauty."

The ancient castle of Gight, called in the local vernacular "Geycht," in all its surroundings and associations was as unlike the Abbey mansion of the Byrons as was that pale and commonplace line dissimilar to the violent and lawless race from which sprung Catharine Gordon, the poet's mother. Its ruins still stand on a rocky eminence overlooking the wild and romantic valley of the river Ythan; and the sole resemblance of its history to that of the one-time monkery at Newstead is that its owners were Catholic. Regarding themselves

as good as the King, if not somewhat better, they stood by the Catholic Stuarts, and thus it came about that the Covenanters plundered and despoiled Gight Castle in 1644.

"They took out the iron gates," runs the grim contemporary chronicle, "and the iron stanchions of windows; broke down the glass windows and left neither gate, door, nor window unbroken down; and in effect left them desolate before they removed."

Byron knew its tragic story in all its incidents, and described it as it stood there in the time of his boyhood:

"Worn but unstooping to the baser crowd,  
All tenantless save to the crannying wind,  
Or holding dark communion with the cloud.  
There was a day when they were young and proud;  
Banners on high and battles passed below;  
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,  
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,  
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow."

Pedigrees and genealogies and the ruins of abandoned castles mean little in the lives of ordinary men; but doom and omen and portent are legible between the dry lines of the family records and in the ancient stones of the roofless towers that remain as memorials of the poet's maternal atavistic inheritances.

The best-preserved part of Gight Castle is the doorway of large dressed stones; and above it is a vacant space where the family coat of arms had once been. In what is left of the groined arch the most notable thing is the keystone, on which are still discernible a bleeding heart and a crown of thorns.

Less clearly defined on the sides are strange emblems of crucifixion—pierced hands and feet, hammer, nails, a spear, the reed of the vinegar laid on hyssop. The mortal vanities of crest and scutcheon have vanished: the imperishable heraldry of passion and agony and death remain.

### III

#### THE HEN'S FEATHER

**W**ITH the twelfth Laird the male line of Gight ended. In 1787 the lands of Gight were sold to the third Earl of Aberdeen, representing the Gordons of Haddo, who were descended from "Jock" Gordon of Scurdargue, the handfasted cousin of Elizabeth Gordon, the founder of the House of Huntly.

There was an old saw of the Gordons:

"When the heron leaves the tree  
The Laird of Gight shall landless be."

The day on which Catharine Gordon married John Byron, so runs the local legend, the heronry of Gight flew over to Haddo, and Lord Haddo, son of the Earl of Aberdeen, on hearing of it, said: "The land will soon follow."

The Norman ancestry of the Byrons was not superior in dignity or antiquity to that constantly and proudly claimed for her Gordon line by the poet's mother; but it was infinitely less distinguished for unrestrained passion, self-will and daring lawlessness. If the theory of the eugenists be true that the son most often takes his mental and moral qualities from the maternal side, there is much in Byron's character and career that may be attributed to what he got from his mother's line of the wild Gordons of Gight.



George Gordon, the ninth Laird, had an only child, whose name was spelled in the French fashion, Marie. She was known as "Lady Marie Gordon," and "Lady Gight," and she was the tenth Laird and the first woman Laird of that ilk. She married at Fyvie, in 1701, Alexander Davidson, junior—or, as the Scottish nomenclature gives it, "younger"—of Newton of Culsalmond. Alexander Davidson and Marie Gordon had a son who assumed the surname of Gordon and the insignia of the family of Gight. This son, Alexander, became the eleventh Laird, and inheriting with the lands and the titles the traditional family doom, was drowned in the Ythan. The local newspaper, recording his death, says:

"He had frequently found benefit to his health by using the cold bath, and he had the misfortune to perish in the water of Ythan while he was bathing, being suddenly swelled with melted snow!" Comment is made on this extraordinary statement by the family historian: "In his plentitude of grief, as you will note, the reporter's sense of syntax failed him (for surely no man ever succumbed to an overdose of melted snow): and I am further inclined to believe that the journalistic reticence of 1760 may have led him to gloss the fact of suicide. Scotsmen in 1760 had not become slaves to the tub so much as to induce them to bathe in ice-covered rivers in the depths of winter. Furthermore, the victim's son, the next Laird of Gight, is said to have drowned himself in the Bath Canal, though no obituary notice I have seen records the fact."

This Alexander Gordon married Margaret Duff; and the alliance appears to have meant more in the poet's life than its suggestion of his youthful love affair with Mary Duff.

The Duffs stood for most things that the Gordons of Gight did not. They were never reckless,—especially with their money; and their commercial success was notable. The Gights increased their bank balance during the incumbency of Margaret Duff, in spite of her large family; and, in addition to their business side, the Duffs had literary talents. It is not improbable that it was to this strain in his blood that Byron owed something of his scholarly and bookish instincts and his poetic genius.

Alexander Gordon and Margaret Duff were the grandparents of Catharine Gordon, who was one of the three daughters of George Gordon, twelfth Laird, drowned at Bath. Her sisters died in the bloom of youth, and she was left the solitary member of the House of Gight upon the demise of her father.

Her marriage to Captain Byron was a foolish one on her side; for he was moneyless, a spendthrift and a licentious ne'er-do-weel; and he was, moreover, incumbered by a daughter of his scandalous first marriage. But he was endowed with a handsome face and winning ways with women, and she believed him to be wealthy. So when he came a-wooing, she took him. He overlooked her homely countenance and dumpy figure when he contemplated her fabled fortune. She wanted a husband who was young and fascinating and could match in aristocracy her own Scots line.

Catharine's canny kinfolks did not take kindly to the marriage. Margaret Duff, her economical grandmother, was especially displeased by it, and thought the young woman had made a great fool of herself, as she had. Her foolishness was emphasized in the old lady's eyes by the fact that the

enamored heiress had made no marriage settlements with the loose-handed scion of the Byrons. This was not according to proper Scots custom, and brought its penalty.

The wedding took place at Bath on May 13th, 1785, where, although she was a stout, short-figured, plain-looking woman, awkward in her movements and provincial in her accent and her manners, Miss Gordon had figured with great energy and some success in the "social swim" of the fashionable resort, "like a society lady."

The newly wedded pair went soon after the marriage to Scotland,—he with the thought in his heart to see what plunder of the bride he might lay his spendthrift hands on,—she to show to the Aberdeenshire gentry how handsome and long-descended a husband she had captured; and they lived for several months in the old ruined castle on the Ythan in gratified complacency.

The object of each was promptly attained. He squandered her fortune in two years' time, while she exhibited him to her countrymen with a complacency that was soon dulled by the lack of enthusiasm which he excited among them.

A local bard expressed the provincial interest in some vigorous verses in the vernacular:

"O, whaur are ye gaein', bonnie Miss Gordon?  
O, whaur are ye gaein', sae bonnie and braw?  
Ye've married, ye've married wi' Johnny Byron  
To squander the lands o' Gight awa.

This youth is a rake, frae England he's come:  
The Scots dinna ken his extraction ava':  
He keeps up his misses, his landlord he duns:  
That's fast drawin' the lands o' Gight awa.

The shootin' o' guns and rattlin' o' drums,—  
The bugle in woods, the pipes in the ha',—  
The beagles a-howlin', the hounds a-growlin',—  
These soundings will soon gar Gight gang awa."

The name of Gordon was added by the facile bridegroom to that of Byron, in compliance with a condition imposed by will on whoever should become the husband of the heiress of Gight; and John Byron Gordon of Gight held himself out as a full-fledged member of the ancient Clan. But when in a parliamentary election he offered to vote against the nominees of the Tory Gordons, they would have none of him and rejected his vote, as they declined his company.

With a reckless indulgence which ill-accorded with her Scots blood and rearing, Catharine Gordon aided and abetted him in the lavish expenditure of her money. A diary, kept by one of her cousins, a young gentleman of the vicinage, relates the details of a visit made to the newly-weds, during which he was "much struck by the extravagance of the establishment, and much impressed by the descriptions of fashionable society given by Captain Byron"; and it is intimated that the gallant Captain "entertained the lad of seventeen years to an account of his own amours, including his flight with Lady Carmarthen; while the exploits of 'Old Q,' who was then the man-about-town, would be related."

The sale of Gight continued the tragedy of its Gordon owners; for its purchaser, a kinsman of the name, though not of the immediate family, was thrown from his horse and killed, and a servant from his home farm met death in a similar way.

Mr. J. M. Bulloch, the historiographer of the Gordons,

tells of many "frets" and "prophecies" that had gathered in the processes of time about the rugged castle and its still more rugged denizens.

"The notoriousness of the Gordons of Gight in Aberdeenshire, the maternal ancestors of Byron, was summed up in a series of strange 'prophecies' as for example:

"Twa men sat down by Ythan Brae:  
The ane to the ither did say—  
'And what sic men may the Gordons  
o' Gight hae been!'"

"A whole round of phrases," he continues, "bears on the same presumption that the Gordons were men of mark. The most familiar of them all—the Gordons hae the guidin' o't'—is remarkably true of their masterful spirit, and the proverbs, 'Ne'er misca' a Gordon in the Raws o' Strathbogie'; and 'You're never allowed to speak ill of the Gordons on their ain Green,' point in the same direction.

"Among a number of funny stories in corroboration, the best is that which tells of the old lady named Gordon, who sat listening to her sons' reading from the Bible that Solomon had a vast number of camels, when she interrupted him with the protest—"The Cawmills (Campbells) are an ancient race, but look an' ye dinna see the Gordons!"

Thomas the Rhymer had foretold:

"At Gight three men a violent death shall dee,  
And after that the lands shall lie in lea."

The prophecy was often spoken among the Aberdeenshire folk, and found fulfillment in later years when the new owner set about destroying the outhouses to "turn the land into lea."

One of the workmen, in allusion to the two deaths that had followed the sale of the property, said:

"Thomas the Rhymer made a mistak' for aince; for the place will be ca'e'd doon wihoot a third man bein' kilt." He had no sooner uttered the words than a wall fell on him and killed him.

The means of the young couple having been exhausted, they went in the summer of 1786 to France to escape the duns, and "Mad Jack" died there—it has been suggested, by suicide—in 1791, at the age of thirty-six, a time of life at which his famous son made his exit at Missolonghi.

Mrs. Byron left her roué husband in France at the close of 1787, and returned to Britain, "big with bairn," as her condition is described in a Scottish record. On the 22nd of January in the following year she gave birth to her first and only child, the poet, at 22 Holles Street, off Oxford Street, London.

Two years later she took up her residence in Aberdeen. Before his death, her spendthrift husband, "on his uppers" at Valenciennes, left that city and came to live again with his wife in her poor rooms in Queen Street, where she welcomed him with an undiminished affection and a generous spirit of forgiveness that was always a part of her tempestuous nature. But her abode was comfortless, and Captain Byron got out and took lodgings, for which she paid, at the other end of the street, where he remained for a time, visiting her occasionally to drink tea and to enliven the function by importuning her for further donations from the miserable pittance his extravagances had left her. While in Aberdeen, prior to his return to France, he took some slight notice of his son, whom he invited to stay with him once, for a night. But

young George proved a disagreeable companion, raised a rumpus, and was sent back to his mother next day with no invitation to return to the paternal domicile.

Prior to the boy's birth, Mrs. Byron had had charge of her stepdaughter, Augusta, the child of her husband's first marriage, whom she treated with kindness and affection. When the coming of her own baby was in sight, she sent Augusta, then six years old, to live with the little girl's grandmother, the Dowager Lady Holderness.

With the disappearance from the picture of Captain John Byron, it is not without interest to note a striking literary alliance that marks the more recent story of Lord Byron's descendants.

Ada, his only legitimate child, married the first Earl of Lovelace, and was the mother of Lady Anne Noel, late Baroness Wentworth, who died in 1917. Her husband was Wilfred Scawen Blunt, famous as diplomat, traveler and Arab horse-breeder, whose life was largely spent in the East, and who was himself a poet and writer of distinction, the author of "Love Sonnets of Proteus," and of a number of other books. The only daughter of this union, Judith, in 1899, at the Roman Catholic Church of Zeytun, Cairo, became the wife of Major the Honorable Neville Stephen Bulwer-Lytton, son of "Owen Meredith" and grandson of the novelist, Bulwer.

## IV

### DAYS OF THE DOMINIES

**B**YRON was two years old when his mother took him to Aberdeen to live. The eight years that he spent in Scotland were the most impressionable of his life, and if heredity and early environment count in making men what their later lives show them to be, his Scottish associations and his maternal descent were undoubtedly potent factors in the development of his character.

He was unlike other small boys. The innocence and joyousness that are the normal accompaniments of healthy and vigorous childhood were slight part of his. Many of those who had been his school fellows described him in after life as moody and sullen and revengeful,—a malignant imp; and the housewives of the neighborhood of his mother's home spoke of him as "Mrs. Byron's crookit deevil." In earning this uncomplimentary appellation he seems to have stood solitary and alone among the small boys of the neighborhood. He led ~~no~~ band of young associates who united with him in his lawless performances, and knew no touch of romance like that of Stevenson and his fellows, who carried the tiny lanterns buttoned in their blouses, and disclosed them at times to let the lights shine out and demonstrate to admiring grown-ups that they were pirates and robbers bent on errands of desperate danger. The deeds of Mrs. Byron's crooked



devil were usually solitary and sometimes malicious and revengeful, evincing a vindictive spirit against those with whom he chanced to quarrel. He had "silent rages," and gave way to frequent ebullitions of unrestrained and frantic passion. In the infrequent reminiscences that have been preserved of his childhood there is with few exceptions, a singular and abnormal lack of any exhibition of generous boyish feeling.

These inheritances of violent and uncontrolled temper were in his blood; but they were aggravated by the manner in which his mother dealt with him. She seemed incapable of understanding him,—a strange incapacity when it is considered how much like her, and like those who had preceded her, he was in his lawlessness and rebellion against authority. Their jars and rows and conflicts were unending; but, with all their incompatibility of association, there is no doubt that they entertained for each other a genuine and mutual affection. They were birds of a feather.

"My mother was as haughty as Lucifer," he said of her, "with her descent from the Stuarts and her line from the old Gordons—not the Seton Gordons, as she disdainfully termed the ducal branch. She told me the story, always reminding me how superior her Gordons were to the Southern Byrons, notwithstanding our Norman and always masculine descent."

Although he delighted when a small boy in bedeviling her, that he was at times affectionate as well as annoying is shown in the two stories related by Rogers in his *Table Talk*. One is:

"A lady resident in Aberdeen told me that she used to sit in a pew in St. Paul's Chapel in that town, next to Mrs. Byron's, and that one morning she observed the poet (then

seven or eight years old) amusing himself by disturbing his mother's devotions; he every now and again gently pricked with a pin the large round arms of Mrs. Byron, which were covered with white kid gloves."

The other story demonstrates the better side of his conduct to her:

"Professor Stuart, of the Marischal College, Aberdeen, mentioned to me the following proof of Byron's fondness for his mother: Georgy, and some other little boys, were one day allowed much to their delight to assist at a gathering of apples in the Professor's garden, and were rewarded for their labors with some of the fruit. Georgy, having received his portion of apples, immediately disappeared, and, on his return after barely an hour's absence, to the query where he had been he replied that he had been 'carrying some apples to his poor dear mother.' "

Disraeli is supposed to have depicted their relations, in his Aberdeen days, in *Venetia*:

"Mrs. Cadurcis, since she was a widow, has lived in strict seclusion with her little boy. . . . A very limited income . . . a short and very stout woman with a rubicund countenance, and dressed in a style which remarkably blended the shabby with the tawdry. . . . Puffing, panting and perspiring, now directing her waiting woman, and now ineffectually attempting to box her son's ears, Mrs. Cadurcis indeed offered a most ridiculous spectacle.

"Take that, you brat!" shrieked the mother, when Lord Cadurcis mimicked her, and she struck her own hand against the doorway. . . . Mrs. Cadurcis threw the cage at her son's head. . . . Mrs. Cadurcis went into an hysterical

rage; then, suddenly jumping up, she rushed at her son. . . . Mrs. Cadurcis remained in a savage sulk."

But *Venetia* was published in 1837, thirteen years after Byron's death, when both he and his mother were regarded in England as legitimate subjects of misrepresentation and of exaggerated description.

Byron himself has said that he passed his boyhood at Mar Lodge, near Aberdeen; but this statement, like many others which he made in later life, without due reflection or consideration or intentionally to mislead or mystify, is not correct. He occasionally visited with Mrs. Byron the houses of friends and kinsfolk; and, among other places, he passed some time at Fetteresso, the seat of Colonel Duff, who, with the Duke of Gordon, had been godfather at his christening. When he was seven years old, after an attack of scarlet fever, he stayed for awhile at Ballater, a summer resort about forty miles up the Dee River from Aberdeen. But his mother's financial straits were such that her pride forbade association with the gentry whom she considered her social equals and to whom she could not return the hospitality that they offered her. Her small pittance had been seriously impaired by the final gift which, in her impulsive generosity, she had made to her husband on his last visit to Scotland. She had borrowed the money that enabled him to return to Valenciennes, where he died soon after,—possibly to her own relief and certainly to the gratification of her friends and relations.

In his fifth year she sent little George to a day school in the town, where she paid about five shillings a quarter, the common rate of respectable day schools at that time. The master was "Bodsy" Bowers, whom his young pupil after-

wards described as a dapper, spruce person, and the school room was a low-ceilinged, ill-lighted apartment, with rat-holes in the floor. Whether due to his dislike of "Bodsy," or of the rat-holes, or to his own recalcitrancy, he made no progress at the school; and his testy mother, after twelve months, took him away and put him under private tutors.

Three tutors followed each other in quick succession. They did not satisfy Mrs. Byron, who thought the boy should have shown more rapid progress with his books than he had any inclination to make. The first of the private tutors was Dr. Ross, a minister of one of the Aberdeen churches, whom his pupil describes as a mild-mannered little man, good natured and painstaking. Whatever Mrs. Byron's opinion of Dr. Ross as a tutor may have been, young George quite heartily approved him.

"Under him," he says, "I made astonishing progress."

Mr. Patterson and David Grant, one after the other, succeeded Dr. Ross; and the lad was put at last in the Aberdeen Grammar School. Here he grandiloquently enrolled himself as "Geo. Bayron Gordon," and at a later term, after he had inherited the title and estates, he added to the inscription, "Dom. de Byron," a knowledge of which proclamation excited both the ridicule and wrath of his schoolmates. His faculty for making himself disagreeable to his fellows, which lasted through much of his subsequent school days in England, continually cropped out at the grammar school; and one of them, William Knight, afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy in Marischal College, who was two years Byron's senior, used to tell in later life with immense satisfaction how when "Dom. de Byron" in a fit of unprovoked

rage tore the future professor's jacket, he gave the noble Lord a sound spanking for his conduct.

But more than any learning that he got from the tutors and the schools was what he acquired from the two women with whom in his childhood he came in daily contact,—his mother and his nurse. He might have learned easily enough at school, had he been so inclined: but he was never disposed to do anything under compulsion. His humors and tempers were unrestrained; and he possessed a lively imagination and a quick sensibility which offered a fertile field for the grim legends and shadowy stories of the district and of his Scottish progenitors that the teachings of his mother did not fail to impress on his plastic mind. The melancholy of the mountains, the gloom of the countryside, his own individual loneliness, his early inclination to introspection, were all exaggerated and intensified by the pride and boastful self-assertion of Catharine Gordon, whose fierce temper and reckless language and conduct seemed to illustrate and illuminate the character of the region and of the people of whom she was a part.

"Of Byron personally," says one of his biographers, "we have but to remember that his own early youth was nourished by stern dark influences of Northern sea and sky, and heath-clad rocky mountains, in a land haunted by weird legend; pride of race was in his blood—pride of the old Barons Byron and the yet more illustrious ancestry of his impoverished mother; she, who taught the sullen, brooding child to be so conscious of his high position, and to resent the fallen fortunes and greatness of his house; she who, while injudiciously fond, yet taunted him when angry with his lame-

ness—a lameness that so treated might well help to make him bitter. What an education was this boy's, who needed such extra-judicious and kindly moral training!"

The dark and sullen aspect of these local associations and traditions was deepened by the influence of his mother's servant, Mary Gray, who lived with them through their life in Aberdeen, and went with them afterwards to England. Her hard Calvinistic views, centered in the Kirk and the Catechism, were pronounced; and she undoubtedly made a powerful impression on him. Mrs. Byron had great confidence in her, and Moore has presented her as being very kind to the boy. But if one of Mrs. Byron's friends is to be believed, this woman, who ostensibly was of the "unco guid," was not all that she pretended to be.

"Her conduct to your son," writes this correspondent to George's mother, "was shocking. It was the general topic of conversation at Nottingham. Byron told me that she was perpetually beating him, and that his bones sometimes ached from it; that she brought all sorts of company of the very lowest description into his apartments; that she was out late at night, and he was frequently left to put himself to bed; that she would take the chaise-boys into the chaise with her, and stopped at every little alehouse to drink with them. But, madam, this is not all; she has even traduced yourself."

This conduct on the part of the impeccable Mary Gray occurred during the period when the lad was at Nottingham under charge of a quack named Lavender, who undertook to cure his lameness, but, instead, made it worse.

Whatever the influence of his "rigid righteous" nurse may have been, it is undoubtedly to the Scottish environment of

his boyhood and to his mother's oft repeated legends and stories of the Gight Gordons that the tenor of his maturer mind, as expressed in the dark and guilty characters painted in his poems, may be ascribed; and it is no less likely that the dogmas of Calvinism which crop out in his writings, his conversations, and his conduct came from Mary Gray. What else she may have taught him is concealed in a mist of surmise that the light of facts has never dispelled.

The doom of a fated race hung over him. The continual excitement arising from his mother's extravagant treatment, the inherited violence of his temper, his pride of long descent humiliated by the poignancy of the poverty that he lived in, and the early mental agony of his lameness had each a profound effect on his boyhood.

But with all their gloom and trouble the Scottish years sowed the seeds of his poetic genius, and the longest of his juvenile poems is in the solemn Celtic style of Ossian.

During his stay with the quack doctor at Nottingham, he studied Virgil and Cicero under the local schoolmaster, Mr. Rodgers. He recollected Mr. Rodgers in later life with affection, because the schoolmaster "read with him"—instead of compelling him to read for himself—these classic authors. It was a distinguishing trait of his later years that he usually recalled with generous expression those who were forbearing and kind in his youth.

From his eleventh to his thirteenth year he attended the school of Dr. Glennie at Dulwich, while his mother resided at Sloan Terrace, London. He thought the Dulwich school a "damned place."

## V

### LOVE'S YOUNGEST DREAMS

**H**IS lifelong passion for the other sex appears to have developed at an early age, if the stories told of his amatory adventures while a schoolboy in Aberdeen may be believed. Scottish writers who have recounted his juvenile love-passages do not agree in all the details; and one of these affairs seems incredible. This was an extremely youthful episode, mentioned by a local annalist, that must have had some foundation in fact, though it is amazing when the age of the young lover is considered. The object of this tender *liaison* was said to be a Woodside girl named "Lexy" Campbell, whose infantile lover has been given the benefit of a doubt by commentators more charitable than the Aberdeen story-teller.

"As Byron was only nine years old at the time," says Mr. Bulloch, who narrates the incident in his account of the Gordons of Gight, "it is inconceivable that 'poor Lexy' should have lost caste by this affair, as Morgan declared, and if her subsequent career was 'unfortunate,' Byron was surely not responsible."

Another and better vouched-for love affair of his extreme youth, which took place while he was in Scotland, before the "Lexy" Campbell adventure, was that with his kinswoman Mary Duff. He was not quite eight years old when, accord-



ing to his own account, he formed a passionate attachment for this Cousin Mary; and nineteen years afterwards he gives an extraordinary account of his recollections of her.

"I have been thinking lately a good deal of Mary Duff. How very odd that I should have been so devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion nor know the meaning of the word and the effect! My mother used always to rally me about this childish amour, and at last, many years after, when I was sixteen, she told me one day: 'O Byron, I have had a letter from Edinburgh, and your old sweetheart Mary Duff is married to Mr. C.' And what was my answer? I really cannot explain or account for my feelings at this moment, but they nearly threw me into convulsions, and alarmed my mother so much that after I grew better she generally avoided the subject—to me—and contented herself with telling it to all her acquaintances."

Although he dwells on it with such confidence, the Mary Duff story has an element of uncertainty in the identity of Mary herself. Local writers say that this object of his juvenile regard was not Mary Duff at all, but that she was Mary Robertson, the daughter of James Robertson of Ballaterich, with whom Byron lodged for three summers and possibly four, from 1795 to 1798. This girl was his senior by six years, a difference in age which is often chafing to small boys even older than Byron then was. So strong a hold has the legend of Mary Robertson on the local tradition that the box-bed in which Byron slept at Ballaterich is still preserved, and does service as a "cheese-press" at Dee Castle, a short distance from the Robertsons' cottage. Mary Robertson married an excise officer and died in Aberdeen in 1867; and

Mary Duff married a respectable wine-merchant named Cockburn.

Whichever of the two Marys it was who was the object of Byron's young passion, or whether his ardor embraced them both, it is of Mary Duff that he tells the sensational story of how the news of her marriage affected him.

He indulges in self-analysis in regard to the episode, and inquires into its psychological meaning, in the further statement:

"Now what could this be? I had never seen her since her mother's *faux pas* at Aberdeen had been the cause of her removal to her grandmother's at Banff. We were both the merest children. I had, and have, been attached fifty times since that period; yet I recollect all we said to each other, all our caresses, her features, my restlessness, sleeplessness, my tormenting my mother's maid to write for me to her,—which she at last did to quiet me. Poor Nancy thought I was wild and, as I could not write for myself, became my secretary. I remember too our walks, and the happiness of sitting by Mary in the children's apartment at their house, not far from the Plainstones at Aberdeen, while her lesser sister, Helen, played with the doll, and we sat gravely making love in our own way.

"How the deuce did all this occur so early? Where could it originate? I certainly had no sexual ideas for years afterward, and yet my misery, my love for that girl, were so violent that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. Be that as it may, hearing of her marriage several years afterward was as a thunderstroke. It nearly choked me, to the horror of my mother and the astonishment and al-

most incredulity of everybody; and it is a phenomenon in my existence, for I was not eight years old, which has puzzled and will puzzle me to the latest hour of it. And lately, I know not why, the recollection (*not* the attachment) has recurred as forcibly as ever; I wonder if she can have the least remembrance of it or me, or remember pitying her sister, Helen, for not having an admirer too. How very pretty is the perfect image of her in my memory. Her brown dark hair and hazel eyes, her very dress—I should be quite grieved to see her now. The reality, however beautiful, would destroy or at least confuse the features of the lovely Peri which then existed in her and still lives in my imagination at the distance of more than sixteen years.”

Later befell his juvenile English *tendresses*.

“My first dash into poetry,” he says, “was as early as 1800. It was the ebullition of a passion for my first cousin, Margaret Parker. I was then about twelve; she rather older, perhaps a year.”

This girl inspired him with a romantic attachment which was intensified by her early death. She was the inspiration of his poems to “Thyrza,” but his love for her was more a figment of the imagination than a reality. He wrote her elegy a little more than two years after meeting her. He was then in his twelfth year; and her memory grew more lovely than she had ever been in life. She became to him in the retrospect “one of the most beautiful of human beings,” and he said that “she looked as if she has been made out of rainbow,—all beauty and peace.”

During his school days at Harrow, he was accustomed to spend his vacations at Newstead Abbey. On one of these

occasions he engaged in the most serious love-affair that he had then known. The Aberdeen *liaisons* had been cases of puppy-love; and even Margaret Parker's romance had been little more than a dream. But Mary Chaworth was a creature outside his former experience. She was some years his senior, a grown woman, attractive, sprightly, and sufficiently endowed with the arts of coquetry to delight in the passion her beauty and charm inspired in her young boy-lover, who was just developing into adolescence. The fact that she was in love with the man whom she afterwards married and to whom she was even then engaged, lent a dangerous fascination to the sport of a daring flirtation with the impressionable Lord of Newstead Abbey. He was ardent and passionate in his pursuit of her; and she, flattered and charmed by his devotion, met him in secret at a place of rendezvous between her own home, Annesley, and the Abbey property where had resided the bad old Lord William who had killed her kinsman. She gave him her picture, and carried on a correspondence of notes transmitted through mutual confidants. The affair progressed so far that he occasionally went to Annesley to see her; and now and then he was invited to spend the night. But his Scottish superstition stood in the way. Presentiments and ghostly warnings and supernatural fears were his constant companions; and while it would have been very pleasant to him to know that he was sleeping under the same roof-tree with his sweetheart, he felt an unconquerable apprehension that the men and women of the portraits on the Annesley walls would come down from their frames to disturb the slumbers of one of the name to which its doors had so long been closed.

Mary Chaworth, after enjoying the flirtation, finally married her more mature admirer, to Byron's great distress and mortification. The union was not a happy one, and the parties separated and were divorced. The romantic feeling which women often entertain for men who once loved them induced the divorced lady to seek an interview with her former lover. On the advice of his half-sister, Augusta, whose counsel, always prompted by an unselfish sisterly devotion, was usually judicious, he declined the proposed meeting.

In this affair with Mary Chaworth poetry united with passion; and it was of her that he afterwards composed *The Dream*, and the lines beginning,

"O, had my fate been joined to thine."

Writing about her in later years, like the fox in the fable, he considered her sour grapes. "I found her," he says, "like the rest of her sex, anything but angelic": but in spite of this final estimate, he adds:

"Had I married Miss Chaworth, perhaps the whole tenor of my life would have been different."

His change of views and opinions about people and things was as frequent as those of the colors of the chameleon, to which many of his biographers have compared him.

## VI

### THE PLACE OF THE SKULLS

ON the death of the evil old Lord William, his grand-uncle, the son of Captain "Jack" Byron and Catharine Gordon, then ten years of age, succeeded to the title and estates. In the autumn of 1798, Mrs. Byron sold her small belongings in Aberdeen with the exception of her scanty supply of plate and linen, which she took with her, and, accompanied by her small son and her Calvinistic servant, Mary Gray, went to England. The entire amount realized by her from the disposition of her household effects was less than £75.

They did not live at Newstead. The desolation that had been wrought there by its last owner was more than she could stand; and they went to reside at Nottingham in the neighborhood where the quack Lavender had tried his unskilled hand at curing the boy's lameness.

Lavender's treatment had caused him constant torture. His teacher at Nottingham, the American Loyalist, Dummer Rodgers, said to him: "Such pain as I know you must be suffering, my Lord!" "Never mind, Mr. Rodgers," he replied, "you shall not see any signs of it in *me*."

Mrs. Byron, though ill-favored in face and figure, bad-tempered and violent, and often not unlike Mrs. Cadurcis in her truculent treatment of her little son, was a woman of

marked individuality and strength of character. Much has been written of her calculated to belittle her and to leave impressions of her grotesqueness, her weakness, and her illiteracy; but for all this, she possessed force and courage and generosity and a noble independence. She resembled a red Indian in her animosities, and would have had no hesitation, like some of her ancestors, in sticking a knife in an enemy; but she was not incapable of self-sacrifice and kindness, and after the subsidence of her passionate bursts of anger she was usually repentant and remorseful.

She possessed the outspoken courage of her convictions and, though an aristocrat to her finger-tips in her pride of race and long descent and in all her feelings, like her son she was a lover of liberty. Among her Tory kinsfolk in the North she refused to be called a "Whig" or a "Liberal," regarding these appellations as milk-and-watery. She proclaimed herself a "Democrat" in a day when "Democrat" was a synonym of "Anarchist"; and she hoped the time would come "when Kings and Tyrants would be overthrown and punished."

She taught this to the "lame brat," as she once called him, when at Aberdeen; and her political teachings left a deep and lasting impression on his mind. She had borne with a degree of patience, that marked in distinguished measure her possession of that virtue, the outrageous indignities of her blackguard husband who abandoned her after sucking up her fortune like a leech. She treated with all the kindness possible to her tempestuous and ill-regulated nature her little stepdaughter, Augusta, whom the child's father left to her care after he had squandered her fortune and rendered her practically penniless.

She possessed little education, and she talked with a broad Scots burr, and she dressed with the lack of taste which unhappy poverty often compels. But she was not destitute of a certain shrewdness and intelligence, which enabled her to carry herself in the extreme need to which she had been reduced with an appearance of pride and courage worthy of the best of her royal race.

Her temper was ferocious, yet back of it lay a tenderness that is not infrequently discovered in persons given to quick and evanescent angers.

But her judgment about the boy was unbalanced, and influenced by her momentary impulses; and she constantly interfered with his schooling and with his schoolmasters.

At Dulwich she annoyed Dr. Glennie to such an extent that he appealed to Lord Carlisle, the lad's guardian, to intervene. He refused, saying that he "would have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron."

She died "from a fit of rage," says Moore, "brought on by reading over an upholsterer's bill. It was an end characteristic of her Gordon line. The combination of Scottish thrift and Gight temper was too much for her.

Her fatal illness was so sudden and unexpected that Byron, in London, just returned from his first journey abroad, upon hearing of it, hurried post haste to Newstead Abbey, but arrived there after her death.

He wrote to one of his friends:

"Thank God, her last moments were most tranquil. I am told she was in little pain, and not aware of her situation. I now feel the truth of Mr. Gray's observation: 'That we can only have one mother.' Peace be with her."



Moore relates that "on the night after his arrival at Newstead, Mrs. Byron's maid, on passing the room where the body lay, heard a heavy sigh from within. On entering the room she found Byron sitting in the dark by the bed. When she spoke to him, he burst into tears and exclaimed: 'O, Mrs. By! I had but one friend in the world and she is gone.'" On the day of the funeral, he refused to follow the corpse to the grave, but watched the procession move away from the door of Newstead; then, turning to Rushton, bade him bring the gloves, and began the usual sparring exercise. Only his silence, abstraction, and unusual violence betrayed to his antagonist the state of his feelings."

She was buried in the vault of Hucknall-Torkard Church, Notts, where now rest the bodies of her son and his daughter, Ada. For many years there hung in the vestry of the church a hatchment framed and painted in silk, a little more than a foot square, bearing this inscription:

"The Honorable Cath. Gordon Byron of Gight,  
Mother of Geo. Lord Byron,  
And lineal descendant of the Earl of Huntly,  
And Lady Jane Stuart,  
Daughter of King James the First of Scotland,  
Died in the 46th<sup>th</sup> year of her age,  
August 1st. 1811."

Newstead Abbey was originally a priory of Black Canons, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was founded in the year 1170 by Henry II, and its medieval origin accounts for the many curious carvings and pictures and objects of ancient and depressing gloom that were all about the place when Byron came into his inheritance. In his room, during the

brief time when he lived there, were some classic busts, a select collection of books, an antique cross, a sword in a gilt case, and at the end of it two finely polished skulls on a pair of light stands.

Always the skulls!

In the garden was a great profusion of skulls, taken up from the burial ground of the Abbey and heaped in piles together.

One of these gruesome emblems of mortality he had caused to be made into a drinking-cup. A visitor, at a time when the place had passed into other hands, has given a graphic account of this famous beaker. After alluding to the portrait of Byron by Phillips, "over the fireplace" in the room that had once been the refectory of the old monks, but was then "the grand drawing room," he speaks of the cup as "one of the two striking objects" that he saw:

"The other is a thing about which everybody has heard and of which few have any just idea. In a cabinet at the end of the room, carefully preserved and concealed in a sliding case, is kept the celebrated skull-cup, upon which are inscribed those splendid verses:

"'Start not, nor deem my spirit fled.'

"People often suppose from the name that the cup retains all the terrific appearances of a death's head, and imagine they could

"'Behold through each lack-lustre eyeless hole  
The gay recess of wisdom and of wit.'

"Not at all; there is nothing whatever startling in it. It is well polished; its edge is bound by a broad rim of silver,

and it is set in a neat stand of the same metal which serves as a ladle, and upon the four sides of which, and not upon the skull itself, the verses are engraved. It is, in short, in appearance a very handsome utensil, and one from which the most fastidious person might, in my opinion, drink without scruple. It was always produced after dinner when Byron had company at the Abbey, and a bottle of claret poured in it."

These were only simple dinners, and seldom given, except when some of his former college mates at Cambridge visited him. The skull was more ornamental than useful, and the bottles of claret which were poured into it were very few. When his friends Hobhouse and Lord Clare came, it was burgundy.

There were other things of darkness and melancholy at Newstead Abbey, and he never cared particularly for the place. He killed two birds with one stone when he wrote to his mother a short time before her death:

"You will consider Newstead as your house, not mine. I'm only a visitor."

The Abbey and grounds had been stripped and despoiled by evil old Lord William. The stone coffin in one corner of the servants' hall, usually the receptacle of fencing-gloves and foils, was not an enlivening spectacle. There were weeds about the scum-covered pond into which Lord William was said to have hurled his lady in one of his fits of fury, whence she was rescued by the gardener, who gave his master a sound beating for his barbarity. Hardly less cheerful than the coffin and the stagnant pond were the two great satyrs at the end of the garden,—“he with his goat and club, and Mrs.

Satyr with her chubby cloven-footed brat, placed on pedestals at the intersections of the narrow and gloomy pathways." They were known to the neighboring peasantry as "the oud Laird's devils."

"Murray, Byron's publisher, visited Newstead in the first heyday of the poet's fame, and relates what he saw:

"I had surmised the possibly easy restoration of this once noble abbey, the mere skeleton of which is now crumbling to ruins. Lord Byron's immediate predecessor stripped the whole place of all that was splendid and interesting, and you may judge what he must have done to the mansion when I inform you that he converted the grounds that used to be covered with the finest trees, like a forest, into an absolute desert. Not a tree is left standing; and the wood thus shamefully cut down was sold in one day for £60,000. The hall of entrance has about eighteen large niches, which had been filled with statues, and the side walls covered with family portraits and armor. All these have been mercilessly torn down, as well as the magnificent fireplace, and sold. All the beautiful paintings which filled the galleries—valued at that day at £80,000—have disappeared, and the whole place is crumbling into dust. No sum short of £100,000 would make the place habitable."

## VII

### BOOKS AND A BEAR

**B**YRON'S school days with Dr. Glennie at Dulwich, where he spent two years, illustrate the beneficent influence of the schoolmaster, not so much in the amount of study that the Doctor got out of him as in the development of kindly feelings and an amiability that had not theretofore been conspicuous in his disposition. Under Dr. Glennie's charge he became addicted to reading poetry and history; and, having access to his preceptor's library, he read through a collection of the English poets that he found there.

He said of himself: "I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else reads, and had read all sorts of reading since I was five years old." He kept this up all his life.

At Harrow he had a bad time for the first year and a half, and hated the place. Before he left it, at the end of four years, he had come to like it. Here he exhibited an oratorical rather than political inclination and talent, which led those who observed him to prophesy for him a distinguished public career; but he showed no desire to study, and left no other reputation there than that of a more than ordinarily intelligent boy.

From the public school at Harrow he followed the normal course of the young scions of the nobility and gentry and was sent by his guardian to Cambridge, where he entered Trinity College.

Here the story of indifference to prescribed study and the lack of ambition for academic distinction is continued. The system of reading under the direction of tutors was not to his liking. He read constantly and voraciously, and usually good literature; but the volumes were of his own choosing. Even when a lad of ten years at Aberdeen he had gone through all the travels and histories and books about the East that he could lay his hands on.

He made no effort at Cambridge to achieve distinction either as student or speaker or writer. He had no ambition to become "a senior wrangler." The college prizes and silver cups and competitive poems might go hang for him. He cared nothing for them. He kept a young bear in his room at Trinity for a time, and he told his friends that he was training the cub for a "fellowship."

His fondness for animals was an early developed trait, and proved a lasting one. In the short time he lived at Newstead, his most constant companion was a Newfoundland dog that he was fond of taking with him in his boating expeditions. With a cynicism seldom apparent in one so young he delighted in testing the dog's fidelity by falling out of the boat as though accidentally. The faithful creature never failed to plunge in after him and drag him out. When the dog died, he erected a monument over his grave and placed on it the famous inscription:

"To mark a friend's remains these stones arise—  
I never knew but one, and here he lies."

In the years that he spent in Italy preceding his death at Missolonghi he traveled from place to place with a menag-

erie of domestic animals that inhabited with him the houses in which he lived. When he went to Geneva, on his second journey abroad, he was accompanied by a caravan of horses, dogs, cats and chickens. At Ravenna he kept in his place eight great dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow and a falcon, that had free range of the rooms and were often encountered on the stairways; and he also had nine horses for riding and driving.

Shelley, on one occasion, visiting him in his palace there, adds to the list: "I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea hens and an Egyptian crane."

In his diary at Ravenna he frequently mentions his animals. "Gave the falcon some water." "Played with my mastiff,—gave him his supper." "Beat the crow for stealing the falcon's victuals."

His interest in the brute creation was not limited to the domestic animals.

"In the world," he once said, "I am always irritable and violent; the very noises of the streets of a populous city affect my nerves. I seemed, in a London house, cabined, cribbed, confined, and felt like a tiger in too small a cage. Apropos of tigers, did you ever observe that all people in a violent rage walk up and down the place they are in, as wild beasts do in their dens? I have particularly remarked this, and it proved to me what I never doubted, that we have much of the animal and the ferocious in our natures, which I am convinced is increased by an over-indulgence of our carnivorous propensities."

In his "Journal" he writes, on November 14, 1813:

"Two nights ago I saw the tigers sup at Exeter 'Change

. . . such a conversazione! There was a hippopotamus, like Lord Liverpool in the face; and the Ursine Sloth had the very voice and manner of my valet—but the tiger talked too much. The handsomest animal on earth is one of the panthers; but the poor antelopes were dead. I should hate to see one *here*; the sight of the camel made me pine again for Asia Minor.” All beasts and birds interested him.

He had a not infrequent habit of calling people by names which their resemblances to certain animals suggested. On account of Shelley's appearance, which Trelawny describes as “tall, slim and bent from eternally poring over books,” with a head that “was very small,” and from his undulating movement when he walked Byron usually spoke of him to the Cornishman as “The Snake.”

He was haunted with a great horror of obesity, and not only was seldom “over-indulgent in his carnivorous propensities,” but rigidly abstemious in eating reasonable and proper food at proper times. He would occasionally boast of his capacity for drinking and used to say: “We young Whigs imbibed claret and so saved our constitutions; the Tories stuck to port and destroyed theirs and their country.” But such boasting was vain and a gesture. Even from the time of his boyhood in England, he was exceedingly self-denying both in drinking and eating, save on rare occasions. When alone he would sometimes drink a small glass of hock or claret, and if very much exhausted at night would take a single glass of grog. Trelawny, in commenting on his occasional nocturnal drink of whiskey and water, says that he sometimes mixed it for him, and would lower it to what sailors called “water-be-witched,” and that he never made any remark.



"I, once to try him," he adds, "omitted the alcohol; he then said, 'Tre, have you not forgotten the creature comfort?' I then put in two spoonfuls, and he was satisfied. This does not look like an habitual toper. His English acquaintances in Italy were, he said in derision, all milksops. On the rare occasions of any of his former friends visiting him, he would urge them to have a carouse with him; but they had grown wiser. He used to say that little Tommy Moore was the only man he then knew who stuck to the bottle and put him on his mettle, adding: 'But he is a native of the damp isle, where men subsist by suction!'"

As a boy at school, and to the time of his Cambridge career, he had been fat and chubby to a degree of disfigurement. This plethoric condition was very mortifying to him, and made him diffident and disinclined to go into company; and nothing so quickly aroused his anger as for any one to allude to it. One of his friends, who had not seen him for some time, said to him in Italy: "Byron, how well you are looking!" Byron was pleased, but when he thoughtlessly added "You are getting fat," the poet's face reddened and his eyes blazed. "Do you call getting fat looking well, as if I were a hog?" Then he muttered: "The beast! I can hardly keep my hands off him."

His dread of becoming obese arising originally from personal vanity and the fear of being ridiculed, as he often had been, by his school companions, became an obsession with him after his mother's death: she had possessed the same dread, and it is probable that he often heard her mention it. When she died suddenly, at a comparatively early age, he may have attributed her end to some heart affection induced

by her corpulent habit. Trelawny, writing of this fear of growing fat, says:

"Byron had not damaged his body by strong drink, but his terror of getting fat was so great that he reduced his diet to the point of absolute starvation. He was of that soft, lymphatic temperament which it is almost impossible to keep within a moderate compass, particularly as in his case his lameness prevented his taking exercise. When he added to his weight, even standing was painful; so he resolved to keep down to eleven stone, or shoot himself. He said everything he swallowed was instantly converted into tallow and deposited on his ribs.

"He was the only human being I ever met with who had sufficient self-restraint and resolution to resist this proneness to fatten: he did so, and at Genoa, where he last weighed he was ten stone, nine pounds, and looked much less. This was not from vanity about his personal appearance, but from a better motive; and as, like Justice Greedy, he was always hungry, his merit was the greater. Occasionally he relaxed his vigilance, when he swelled apace."

Though he eagerly desired to be thought thin, he did not like thin women. He told Lady Blessington that "if they were young and pretty, they reminded him of dried butterflies; but if neither, of spiders, whose nests would never catch him if he were a fly, as they had nothing tempting."

He frequently asked her: "Don't you think I am getting thinner?" or "Did you ever see anyone so thin as I am who was not ill?"

At a famous dinner at the house of the poet Rogers, after *Childe Harold* appeared, where he met Moore and Campbell

for the first time, he astonished them by declining to partake of the fish, meat and wine, and in default of his usual regimen of biscuits and soda-water, which his embarrassed host was unable to supply, he stayed his gnawing hunger with potatoes and vinegar.

This abstemiousness resulted in his keeping down the fat; but it finally made of him a confirmed dyspeptic, and caused him at times to suffer excruciating pains. The laudanum bottle, for the alleviation of these agonies, came to be his frequent companion.

## VIII

### "THE GOOD OLD TIMES"

**H**IS life in London before his earliest journey abroad was the unconventional one of a young man about town, at a time when many things were forgiven aristocratic and attractive youth.

He had written and published at Newstead Abbey, his first volume of verse that had evoked the notorious criticism of the *Edinburgh Review*, beginning: "The poetry of this young lord belongs to the class which neither God nor man are said to permit"; and he had retaliated with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in which his gibing pen ran amuck among all the contemporary literary lights, dim or brilliant, of England and Scotland.

When he went up to London, and began his free and unrestrained career there, that included among his intimates pugilists, prize-fighters, and ladies whose virtue would not always pass decorous muster, he excited various comments on the part of those who were cognizant of his high rank and anticipated for him the distinction that belongs to evident talent. Jackson, the pugilist, and keeper of a noted resort where the young sports of the town boxed, fenced, and took part in prize-fights or witnessed them, was among his friends, and on one occasion was an honored and fêted guest at Newstead Abbey. An episode that caused amusement and con-

siderable talk among those who knew him, and still greater gossip among those who only knew of him, was the residence in his lodgings of a pretty young girl, whom he dressed in boy's clothes and took around with him, introducing her with cynical dignity as his "brother Gordon."

It was the mode among the *jeunesse dorée* of the time to be openly fast. The period was one that was known by a succeeding generation, after the fashion of other successive generations that laud the past, as "the good old times." While the new opinions of the French Revolution about the rights of man and democracy were taboo among both Tories and Whigs, whatever the gay young aristocrats of the day did was good form. It was the extreme and outspoken radical opinions of Byron on religion and manners and politics and government that came in time to give him his bad reputation,—not his amours, nor his loose mode of life.

"The morals of the age," writes a woman biographer of him, "regarded adultery as the normal occupation of all men and most women": and neither Lady Caroline Lamb, daughter of the Earl of Bessborough and niece of Georgiana, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, nor the lovely Lady Oxford, wife of the fifth Earl, who Byron said "resembled a landscape by Claude Lorrain, with a setting sun," nor Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster, nor Lady Frances Arnesley, nor any of the high-born objects of his attentions, lost social caste by their association with him.

Sydney Smith says of the time:

"From the beginning of the century to the death of Lord Liverpool was an awful period for anyone who ventured to maintain liberal opinions. He was sure to be assailed with

all the billingsgate of the French Revolution. 'Jacobin,' 'Leveler,' 'Atheist,' 'Incendiary,' 'Regicide,' were the gentlest terms used, and any man who breathed a syllable against the senseless bigotry of the two Georges was shunned as unfit for social life. To say a word against any abuse which a rich man inflicted and a poor man suffered, was bitterly and steadily resented." The man who dared the displeasure of vested privilege by questioning the political or ecclesiastical institutions on which that privilege was founded was damned beyond redemption.

It was this implacable intolerance that condemned Godwin, with his free notions about marriage and government, and his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, with her advocacy of the rights of woman; and, later, Byron and Shelley and Walter Savage Landor, and a host of the brilliant and imaginative young intellectuals of the period. Not what they did, but what they were saying and writing and publishing, outraged the smug British social opinion; and it was in no small part this dogmatism that caused Catharine Gordon, unprepossessing and bad-tempered as she was, who loudly proclaimed herself a "Democrat" and advocated the death of Tyrants and Kings and the liberty of the people, to be pilloried in the histories of her distinguished son as a semi-imbecile and a drunkard.

The spectre of what Tennyson called "the red fool fury of the Seine" caused cold chills to creep down the spine of English Church and State. They were as afraid of catching revolution as old women of catching cold.

All the highborn dandies and exquisites of the day were "limbs" and "sports"; and if they were not acknowledged

"men about town," in obedience to the wordly wisdom of the apothegm: "assume a virtue if you have it not," they pretended to be. It was forgivable to be a young libertine, but beyond pardon to be a young liberty-lover.

Having vented his scorn and contempt on the *Bards and Reviewers*, and turned the tide of delighted and jeering laughter from himself upon them, Byron, growing bored with the emptiness of his London life and the monastic gloom of Newstead Abbey, went abroad in company with his friend and college mate, John Cam Hobhouse who, with Moore, was one of the very few of his early companions who remained his friend to the last.

He had an unconquerable disposition to pose, and took pleasure in exaggerating his own excesses. His confession of his earlier lawless conduct in London gives what is probably a correct exposition of the truth; though his advertisements of himself are not always candid. His imagination was as unrestrained as it was riotous.

"I took my gradations in the vices," he says, "with great promptitude, but they were not to my taste; for my early passions, though violent in the extreme, were concentrated, and hated division or spreading abroad. I could have left or lost the whole world with or for that which I loved; but though my temperament was naturally burning, I could not share in the common libertinism of the place and time without disgust; and yet this very disgust, and my heart thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrunk, as fixing upon one at a time the passions, which spread among many, would have hurt only myself."

This declaration is somewhat hazy, but serves his purpose as a gesture. He was sensational and liked to be considered daring and profligate, and to be admired as a bold, bad youth. But the devil is not always as black as he is painted, nor even as dark as he sometimes desires to appear.

He was twenty-one years old when he set out for the East, with 'Hobhouse.' The thought was in his mind when he was a small boy at Aberdeen, reading everything he could find about the Orient, that some day he would seek high adventure in its lands of romance, and while he was composing his satire at Newstead alluring visions of Eastern countries not infrequently arose between him and the page on which he wrote.

His first thought had been of Persia; then he determined to go to India. He wrote to the Arabic professor at Cambridge for information, and to his mother. With her he had recently had one of his rows, that had resulted in her banishment, after he had told her she was "a vixen," and that the house was not big enough to hold them both. Mrs. Byron had a friend who once resided in India, of whom he wished her to inquire what things would be necessary for the voyage.

His desire to get away from London was not lessened by the episode of his entering Parliament. When he became of age, he formed the determination of engaging in a political career. He had written to his guardian, the Earl of Carlisle, to remind him that he would be twenty-one years old at the commencement of the session, and intimated the hope that the Peer would offer to introduce him to the House of Lords. He received a civil but distant reply, informing him of the method of procedure and of the formalities that



the occasion required. This conduct on the part of the nobleman aroused his reckless wrath, and he struck out of the proof-sheets of his satire, then going through the press, a very complimentary allusion to the Earl and substituted in its place some lines of fierce vituperation. When making his preparations for taking his seat in the Lords, he learned that it would be necessary for him to prove his grandfather's marriage with Miss Trevannion, which had taken place at Carhais. No regular certificate of the event could be produced, and his wrath increased when he was required to obtain affidavits. The necessary preliminaries having been fully concluded, he presented himself to the Peers, alone and unaccompanied.

Marching up to the official who administered the oath, he complied with that formality. Lord Eldon, the Chancellor, left his seat and approaching the neophyte, with a friendly smile offered him his hand in welcome. Byron touched the extended hand with his finger-tips, and made a stiff little bow; and the Chancellor returned in a miff to his place. In welcoming him, Eldon had courteously expressed his regret that the rules of the House had obliged him to call for proofs of his grandfather's marriage.

"Your Lordship has done your duty," condescendingly replied the new Peer; and the words and their manner caused the Chancellor a greater ire than had the icy bow and the reluctant fingers.

With the remorse that usually followed any consciousness of having made a fool of himself, he later sought to excuse his cavalier conduct to the Lord Chancellor by saying it had been his purpose to let that high functionary understand that

he did not wish to appear an ally of either of the two political parties.

He already took himself very seriously as a statesman.

His brief experience in Parliament was marked by a speech that excited favorable comment and expectations of a distinguished political career. He made two other speeches that were disappointing; and he had no further interest in the House of Lords. It required very little to jar his self-esteem, or to balk his fickle purpose.

Bagehot has said of him, with shrewd discernment:

"Sir Robert Peel was a statesman for forty years; under our constitution, Lord Byron, eminent as was his insight into men, and remarkable as was his power, at least for short periods, of dealing with them, would not have been a statesman for forty days."

## IX

### EASTWARD BOUND

**I**N July, 1809, Byron and Hobhouse set sail from England for Lisbon on the voyage that was to give the world *Childe Harold*. Their way led through Spain, Sardinia, Malta and Greece, and ended at Constantinople. It left in its wake a trail of feminine adventures, duly chronicled by Galt, the Scottish novelist, who fell in with them at Gibraltar and, after Byron's death, wrote a life of him that ranks as one of the best of his biographies.

At Seville he lodged in the house of two single ladies, one of whom was about to be married. His handsome person and winning ways with women came into play in his association with his hostesses; for, though he only remained three days, the engaged one paid him "the most particular attentions" and, when they parted, embraced him with great tenderness, cutting off a lock of his hair for a keepsake and giving him one of her own.

"With this specimen of Spanish manners," we are told, "he proceeded to Cadiz, where various incidents occurred to confirm the opinion he had formed at Seville of the Andalusian belles, and caused him to leave Cadiz with regret and determine to return to it."

Galt had never before met either Byron or Hobhouse. The latter, who was already known in England in a mild literary

way through some published translations and poems of a respectable character, pleased the Scottish writer by his geniality and his droll stories; but Byron made no such agreeable impression.

“His Lordship affected,” says Galt, “as it seemed to me, more aristocracy than befitted his years or the occasion; and I then thought of his singular scowl, and suspected him of pride and irascibility.”

Byron held himself aloof from the passengers and sat on the rail, leaning on the mizzen shrouds, “inhaling, as it were, poetical sympathy from the gloomy rock, then dark and stern in the twilight. There was in all about him that evening much waywardness; he spoke petulantly to Fletcher, his valet; and was evidently ill at ease with himself and fretful towards others. I thought,” says Galt, “he would turn out an unsatisfactory shipmate; yet there was something redeeming in the tones of his voice when, some time after he had indulged his sullen meditation, he again addressed Fletcher; so that, instead of finding him ill-natured, I was soon convinced he was only capricious.”

About the third day out he became more sociable, and took part in the sport of shooting at bottles with pistols, and in catching a shark. But his moods were fitful. Galt, who observed him closely, records his impressions:

“Byron was, during the passage, in delicate health and upon an abstemious regimen. He rarely tasted wine, nor more than half a glass, mingled with water when he did. He ate little; no animal food, but only bread and vegetables. He reminded me of the gowl that picked rice with a needle; for it was manifest that he had not acquired his knowledge of

the world by always dining so sparsely. If my remembrance is not treacherous, he only spent one evening in the cabin with us—the evening before we came to anchor at Cagliari; for when the lights were placed, he made himself a man forbid, took his station on the railing between the pegs on which the sheets are belayed and the shrouds, and there for hours sat in silence, enamored it may be of the moon. He was as a mystery in a winding sheet crowned with a halo.” He delighted in the mysterious and unusual.

At Cagliari, in Sardinia, they landed and were invited to dinner by the British consul. Byron and Hobhouse disgusted Galt by gorgeously arraying themselves for the occasion “as aides-de-camp.”

The travelers stopped at Malta, and having become domiciled there, Byron began the study of Arabic under the tutelage of a monk, who was one of the librarians of the public library. But the rustle of a petticoat was potent to take him away from such abstruse studies, which he varied during a stay of three weeks by an *affaire du cœur* with a lady who was the wife of a former resident minister at the Ottoman Court. “He affected a passion for her,” says his Scottish biographer, “but it was only Platonic.”

She was the “Florence” of *Childe Harold*, and his Platonic affection resulted in her obtaining from him his valuable yellow diamond ring. The lady’s adventurous career gave an additional spice of romance to her charm of person and her intellectual attractions; for “her adventures with the Marquis de Salvo form one of the prettiest stories in the Italian language; and one of her badges of distinction was that she had incurred the special enmity of Napoleon.”

Galt left Byron and Hobhouse in Malta, and later found them at Athens.

"I heard of two English travellers," he writes, "being in the city; and on reaching the Convent of the Propaganda where I had been advised to take up my lodgings, the friar in charge of the house informed me of their names. Next morning Mr. Hobhouse, having heard of my arrival, kindly called on me, and I accompanied him to Lord Byron, who then lodged with the widow of a Greek who had been British consul."

The lady was Madame Theodora Macri, mother of Teresa, subsequently Mrs. Black, but known until her death in 1875 as "The Maid of Athens." Galt says of Madame Macri: "She was, I believe, a respectable person, with several daughters, one of whom has been rendered more famous by his Lordship's verses than her degree of beauty deserved. She was a pale and pensive looking girl, with regular Grecian features. Whether he really cherished any sincere attachment to her, I much doubt. I believe his passion was equally innocent and poetical, though he spoke of buying her from her mother. It was to this damsel that he addressed the stanzas:

"Maid of Athens, ere we part,  
Give, oh! give me back my heart."

From Athens Byron and Hobhouse went to Constantinople, where Hobhouse left him and returned to England. Here he performed the famous exploit of swimming the Hellespont from the European to the Asiatic shore—an adventure on which he greatly plumed himself, though it involved no great risk beyond a severe tax on his physical strength, for he had

taken the precaution to have a boat accompany him all the way. It was a cause of regret to him that there was no Hero to welcome the modern Leander on the farther shore.

All thoughts of Persia and India had now vanished from his mind; and he started homewards over the track by which he had come. He lingered many months at Athens, amid antique associations of Grecian poetry and drama and history, and reached England in the early summer after an absence of two years, to learn of his mother's serious illness at Newstead Abbey, that was soon followed by her death.

He brought back with him the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold*, which he gave to his kinsman, Robert Charles Dallas, whose sister married Captain George Anson Byron. Their descendants now hold the Byron title. Dallas offered the manuscript to Mr. Miller, publisher, of Albemarle Street, "enjoining the strictest secrecy as to the author." Miller declined it, partly on account of some of its sceptical stanzas and partly because it denounced his friend and patron, the Earl of Elgin, as a "plunderer." Dallas then took the poem to John Murray, who with less squeamishness and a more far-sighted business sagacity than Miller had evinced, agreed to print at his own expense a handsome quarto edition, the profits to be shared equally with Dallas, to whom Byron had made a gift of the manuscript.

This bestowal of what proved to be so precious a literary property, and a similar disposition of others of his earlier writings, was a characteristic pose that seems almost incomprehensible. Although he possessed the valuable landed estates of Rochedale and Newstead Abbey, the former was in expensive litigation and the latter in a state of dilapida-

tion and unproductiveness; and he was harassed by a chronic condition of financial distress. His lack of money had been the chief motive that caused him to return from his travels; and his impecuniosity brought the duns and the bum-bailiffs in London about him in swarms. His aristocratic toploftiness in refusing to accept any part of the revenues that soon began to flow into the publishing house of John Murray from his books was an illustration alike of his generosity and his vanity. For a noble Lord of long descent and fashionable association to take pay for the products of his literary genius was too much like being "in trade," and he flattered his self-esteem by giving to others the profits of his pen.

It was not until 1817 at Venice that he abandoned this magnificent attitude of "throwing money to the birds." He then demanded of Murray six hundred guineas for *Manfred* and *The Lament of Tasso*. The publisher paid the price with reluctance, and only after Byron threatened to go to another. This was the first payment which he accepted and used for his own purposes. He told Murray that thenceforth he intended to be as mercenary as possible, and asked him to name a sum for the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*. Murray offered fifteen hundred guineas. Byron replied: "I won't take it. I ask two thousand five hundred guineas for it, which you will either give or not as you think proper." Murray "thought proper" to give it.

The publisher's acceptance of *Childe Harold*, which Dallas offered him, with the further agreement that the copyright should depend on the success of the first edition, gratified Byron's vanity immensely. "He was highly pleased," says cousin Dallas, "but still doubted the copyright being worth



my acceptance, promising, however, if the poem went through the edition, to give me other poems to annex to *Childe Harold*."

This was the beginning of the long continued personal and business relations between Murray and the poet.

The first time Murray saw Byron was when his Lordship dropped in on him in Fleet Street after the manuscript was accepted. Later, he came from time to time to the printing house fresh from the fencing-rooms of Angelo and Jackson, while the sheets were passing through the press. Here he would amuse himself by renewing his practice of *carte et tierce* with his walking-cane against the book shelves, as the publisher read aloud passages from the poem with casual ejaculations of admiration.

Byron would say, "You think that a good idea, do you, Murray?" and would fence and lunge with his stick at some specially well-bound book which he had picked out on the shelves before him. Murray afterwards remarked: "I was often very glad to get rid of him."

On the publisher's insistence he altered the objectionable stanza about Lord Elgin, and even consented to change some of the lines that the puritanic Miller had rejected as skeptical.

He refused, however, to allow his name on the title page; but upon Murray's urging he finally consented. The book appeared on March 1, 1812, and was received with instantaneous and tremendous applause.

He turned over in bed one morning when Fletcher drew the curtains and, awaking, "found himself famous."

## X

### AN EAGLE IN THE AIR

THE noble author of *Childe Harold* became the rage in London. Society, always ready to open its doors to literary genius, saw in the new lion an extraordinary combination of poet and peer, and fell on his neck in rapturous adulation. Moreover, it charmed the drawing-rooms and boudoirs to interpret the story of the hero as that of his creator. Trelawny, with keen powers of observation, and the most graphic pen of all those who have described him, paints his picture at this time.

"Mental as well as physical diseases," he says, "are hereditary. Byron's arrogant temper he inherited; his penurious habits were instilled into him by his mother. He was reared in poverty and obscurity, and unexpectedly became a Lord with a good estate. This was enough to unsettle the equanimity of such a temperament as his. But fortune as well as misfortune comes with both hands full; and when, as he himself said, he awoke one morning and found himself famous, his brain grew dizzy, and he foolishly entered the great donkey sweepstakes and ran in the ruck with his long-eared compeers. Galled in the race, he bolted off the course and rushed into the ranks of that great sect that worships golden images. If you come too near the improvident or reckless, there is danger of being engulfed in the vortex they create; whereas, with the thrifty you may do well enough."

The facile changes of expression which characterized his classic face with its accompaniment of curling dark auburn hair were most often observed when he was in the company of women; and even the hated limp from the lame foot was not without its expression of dignity. But the real language of his beautiful countenance and proud bearing was one of romantic and interesting melancholy. He had a habit of lowering brows that produced a picturesque effect and suggested mystery and dark reminiscence. It probably came from indigestion.

His dress at this period was fashionable, and usually of a neatness and simplicity which betokened refined tastes. When he later posed for Count D'Orsay's pencil at Genoa he affected shirts open at the collar, exposing a neck of which he was as vain as a woman; and at times he would adopt costumes that were bizarre and outlandish. He rejoiced at Missolonghi in the embroidered jacket that he got from Trelawny, and he delighted in the gorgeous red uniform in which he greeted the Suliote chiefs when he entered the turbulent town where he died.

He loved to be "pointed at with the finger," and left unused no device to accomplish it. He bedizened his mount and bedecked himself when he went riding. "His horse," says Lady Blessington, "was literally covered with various trappings in the way of cavessons, martingales, and Heaven knows how many other (to me) unknown inventions. The saddle was *à la hussarde* with holsters, in which he always carried pistols. His dress consisted of a nankeen jacket and trousers which appeared to have shrunk from washing; the jacket embroidered in the same color, and with three rows

of buttons; the waist very short, the back very narrow, and the sleeves set in as they used to be ten or fifteen years before; a black stock, very narrow; a dark blue velvet cap with a shade, and a very rich gold band and large gold tassel at the crown; nankeen gaiters and a pair of blue spectacles completed his costume, which was anything but becoming. This was his general dress of a morning for riding, but I have seen it changed for a green tartan plaid jacket."

This was the Gordon plaid with the yellow stripes. It was a favorite dress with him, and he wore it on every convenient occasion.

The grotesque fatness of his boyhood that caused him so much misery and mortification, had disappeared under his strict regimen of food and drink; and at the time of his entrance into the London whirl he was handsome as a Greek god. He possessed a figure that was broad shouldered and muscular and vigorous, and that indicated a high degree of masculine strength. The native woman who laid him out, after death, at Missolonghi, said his skin was as white as a chicken's wing, and his form like Apollo's. His hands, of which he was very proud, were small and delicate; and even his feet, despite the crucifying lameness that no one could account for and which he always endeavored to conceal, were not unshapely in their covering. He had a sweet and melodious voice; and children in the English houses where he became a familiar guest called him "the gentleman who speaks like music."

Shelley and Mary Godwin and Clare Clairmont were often thrilled at night with the beauty of his voice, when from

the lake-shore they heard him singing in his boat after a return from their moonlit boat rides at Geneva.

The somber dignity of his bearing, the romance of his lineage and hereditary social position, the exaggerated stories of his wealth, the public interest in his travels in strange lands, narrated in poetry that struck an unaccustomed note of loftiness and classic taste and knowledge, all combined to lend an irresistible charm to his appearance and to excite an unparalleled interest in his personality. Young and famous and wicked, he literally set the women crazy.

At a fashionable party the Prince Regent, learning of his presence, asked to have the young Lord presented, and expressed his admiration of the poem that was on every tongue. Byron was delighted; but, in one of the frequent moods of perversity that haunted him through life, he conceived an unreasonable animosity to the royal flatterer and with the old Gight spirit of truculence and vindictiveness that had cropped out in the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* he expressed most uncomplimentary opinions of the Prince both in speech and in print; and to the dismay of his friends promptly lost the prestige of the royal patronage.

With a vainglory that recked of no consequences in its exhibition, and a fascination that caught the applause of the fashionable and the frivolous, he went his dazzling and daring way. The enthusiastic looked on him to admire, the serious-minded with a desire to admonish, and the gentle and kindly with a wish to console. Religious women prayed for him, and some, who were not religious, prayed for him in another sense.

The brilliant success of *Childe Harold* served as an inspiration to his renewed literary effort. In the following year *The Giaour* appeared; and in the midst of his corrections of successive editions he wrote in four nights his second Turkish story, *Zuleika*, afterwards known as *The Bride of Abydos*.

Murray, exulting in his new find, gave him to understand that he was very anxious "that their business transactions should occur frequently and be settled immediately," sapiently adding, "for short accounts are favorable to long friendships." He offered him one thousand guineas for *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*, which Byron thought no bad price for a fortnight's work. "Lord Byron," said Sir James Mackintosh, "is the author of the day; six thousand of his *Bride of Abydos* have been sold within a month."

By the end of December in the same year he had written *The Corsair*, beginning it on the 18th and finishing it on the 31st. Murray wrote to him in the following February that this poem had excited a ferment which he was happy to say would subside into lasting fame. "I sold," he said, "on the day of publication—a thing perfectly unprecedented—ten thousand copies."

In April the *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte* was published and fell flat; and the press criticized it fiercely. The newspapers emblazoned their diatribes against it with unpleasant but highly entertaining personalities; and Byron, becoming passionately angry, to Murray's consternation swore that he would buy back the copyrights of all his works, and would suppress every line he had ever written. He said this to the publisher, with the condescending assurance, however, that

it would give him pleasure to preserve his acquaintance and to consider him his friend.

Murray, who was more concerned at a prospective loss of the revenues his Lordship's works afforded than of his friendship, remonstrated vigorously; and the fickle poet, constantly regretting his acts of folly after they had occurred, revoked his decision. In a month he was engaged on *Lara*, which was published at the same time with Rogers' *Jacqueline*.

"Rogers and I," he said to Moore, "have almost coalesced in a joint invasion of the public. Whether it will take place or not, I do not yet know; and I am afraid *Jacqueline* (which is very beautiful) will be in bad company. But in this case the lady will not be the sufferer."

His impulsive generosity often disclosed itself in praise of the works of his contemporaries; but this did not prevent him from damning the authors if they offended him and offered the opportunity for a display of his malicious wit. When the damning was indulged in, the poison of asps was in his ink.

After it was reported to him that Landor, whose poetry he admired, and whom he had taken occasion to commend, had told some one that he either could not or would not read his Lordship's poetry, the irate Byron pilloried him in his verse along with Coleridge and Wordsworth, whom he did not like, and Southey, whom he hated:

"Some persons think that Coleridge hath the sway,  
And Wordsworth has supporters two or three;  
And that deep-mouthed Boeotian, Savage Landor,  
Has taken for a swan rogue Southey's gander."

*Lara* and *Jacqueline* were published anonymously by Murray, who paid for each poem five hundred guineas; and Byron had nothing ill to say about Rogers.

It was in Murray's drawing-room, where the publisher had been in the habit of receiving persons of the highest rank and fame in the literary world—Canning, Frere, Mackintosh, Southey, Campbell, Walter Scott, Madame de Staël, Gifford, Croker, Barrow and others—that Byron and Scott first met. They had before this exchanged letters, and each entertained and expressed for the other an admiration and regard that proved lasting. Murray's son, then John Murray, Junior, who succeeded him in the publishing house, gives an account of this first meeting of the two most popular writers of the day in Britain.

"I can recollect," he says, "seeing Lord Byron in Albemarle Street. So far as I can remember he appeared to me rather a short man, with a handsome countenance remarkable for the fine blue veins which ran over his pale marble temples. He wore many rings on his fingers and a brooch on his shirt-front, which was embroidered. When he called he used to be dressed in a black dress coat (as we should now call it) with grey and sometimes nankeen trousers, his shirt open at the neck. Lord Byron's deformity in his foot was ~~very~~ evident, especially as he walked downstairs. He carried a stick. After Scott and he had ended their conversation in the drawing-room, it was a curious sight to see two of the greatest poets of the age—both lame—stumping downstairs side by side. They continued to meet in Albemarle Street nearly every day, and remained together two or three hours at a time."



His pose continued that of the radical. When the battle of Waterloo occurred Byron, who with all his democratic theories never lost his admiration for "the Little Corporal," who had now become Emperor, or his hatred for Wellington, on hearing of the French debacle and of Napoleon's retreat to Paris, exclaimed, "I'm damned sorry for it!"

His brilliant social career, illumined by his growing fame as a poet, was full of interest both for himself and for the gaping public; and he delighted to feel that he "killed the girls and thrilled the boys."

Some of the women pursued him with a lack of discretion which gave rise to more than one scandal that was rolled under the tongue in the clubs and by the men about town, as well as enjoyed by the fashionable ladies and gentlemen of high society. He told Lady Blessington that the number of anonymous amatory letters and portraits that he received, and all from English ladies, would fill a large volume. "He says he has never noticed any of them," she adds; "but it is evident he recurs to them with complacency."

One of the incidents, which delighted the gossip-mongers and got into the newspapers, became public property and raised a great hullabaloo!

The heroine of the episode was a lady of high rank who, at a "rout" given by Lady Heathcote, made an extravagant scene in which, in revenge, as it was reported, for having been rejected by the poetical Adonis, she attempted suicide "with an instrument, which scarcely penetrated, if it could even inflict any permanent mark on, the skin."

She was Lady Caroline Lamb, a young woman of aristocratic family and associations, and a conspicuous figure in

fashionable society. The poet Rogers had shown her an early copy of *Childe Harold*. She was then in the zenith of her dashing celebrity. "I must see him," she said, "I am dying to see him!"

"He has a club-foot and bites his nails," Rogers told her.

"If he is as ugly as Æsop, I must know him," she replied.

She met him, charmed him, and he made love to her after his prompt and enthusiastic fashion with lovely ladies. The passion was mutual. His beauty and fame were irresistible. She was then in her twenty-seventh year, and he twenty-four. She was married and giddy and daring. Their unconcealed devotion delighted that part of society which rejoiced in scandal, and was euphemistically declared purely Platonic though indiscreet by their more charitable friends and acquaintances, who, after the mode of the day, were not unwilling to condone the fashionable indiscretions of their own social set for the sake of their own indulgences.

But she was not clever enough to keep him. He was an elusive Bird of Time and, having but a little way to flutter, was ever on the wing. He said in later life that she was the only woman he ever knew who did not bore him; yet the statement was impulsive and disingenuous. When, after a long and spectacular exhibition of their "love's young dream," she wanted him to run away with her to South America, he became insufferably bored and quit the game. She had said of him, soon after meeting him, that he was "mad—bad—and dangerous to know"; but she took the risk of knowing him and found her diagnosis measurably correct. While the amour lasted she reveled in it, and afterwards bitterly regretted it.

His Scottish biographer, Galt, tells the story of the ball-room episode with humorous gusto. After stating that the lady's infatuation was well known in society, Galt says that "insane is the only epithet that can be applied to the actions of a married woman who in the disguise of a page flung herself to a man who, as she told a friend of mine, was ashamed to be in love with her 'because she was not beautiful,'—an expression which the teller of the tale characterizes as 'at once curious and just,'—evincing a shrewd perception of the springs of his Lordship's conduct, and the acuteness blended with frenzy and talent which distinguished herself." The incident delighted Galt.

He enlivens his gossip narrative by adding that some two or three days after the occurrence Byron showed him the lady's picture and, while laughing at the absurdity of her conduct, "bestowed on her the endearing diminutive of 'vixen,' with a hard-hearted adjective which I judiciously omit."

It seems to have been a favorite epithet with him for his women-kind who displeased or bored him. He had on at least one occasion applied it to his mother.

The immediate cause of the conduct of the self-immolated victim was never clearly known. The story went that she made several attempts in the course of the evening to fasten herself on him; but, perceiving that she was an object of indifference, she seized the first weapon at hand,—some said a pair of scissors, others a broken jelly-glass—and attempted to cut her jugular vein, "to the consternation," as Galt gleefully adds, "of the dowagers and the pathetic admiration of every miss who witnessed or heard of the rupture."

Byron was in an adjoining room when the weapon was applied; and on being told of it, scowled and said, "It is only a trick!"

It was a tragic affair in its consequence for, though she denied the charge vehemently, the lady was generally accused of having been the person, in her revengeful anger, first to set abroad the horrid story of his alleged relations with his sister, Augusta, that Mrs. Stowe promulgated; and that Lord Lovelace, his grandson, "an eccentric man, with a strain of the authentic family violence," in a quixotic attempted vindication of Lady Byron sought to substantiate in *Astarte*.

Byron's vanity and his unreasoning impulsiveness were constantly causing him to say the unnecessary and exasperating thing. He made enemies, and was conscious of it. With brooding introspection he got it into his head that his popularity was beginning to wane. His money matters worried him grievously, and his dyspeptic digestion distressed him. The gloom of the Scot darkened his spirit.

He thought it would mend matters for him to marry; and this resolution, entered upon and carried out with misgivings, was one of which, like many others, he subsequently sorely repented.

On the second of January, 1815, he was united to Miss Anne-Cabell<sup>1</sup> Millbanke, daughter of Sir Ralph Millbanke; and in a little more than eighteen months after the wedding he had made up his mind to leave England,—“an involuntary exile,” as he says, “intending it should be forever.”

The attitude of the self-centered aristocratic society in which he thought himself entitled to his place, and the relentless hostility of his wife, her mother, her father and her

friends, were the potent influences which prevented his ever returning. The poet of revolution and revolt could have no home in a land that was intolerant of revolt and revolution of whatever kind.

## XI

### A SERPENT ON A ROCK

**F**ROM his boyhood he was intensely superstitious. "He told me," says Lady Blessington, "that Mr. Shelley's spectre had appeared to a lady walking in a garden, and he seemed to lay great stress on this. Though some of the wisest of mankind, as witness Johnson, shared this weakness in common with Byron, still there is something so unusual in our matter-of-fact days in giving way to it, that I was at first doubtful that Byron was serious in his belief. He is also superstitious about days and other trifling things, believes in lucky and unlucky days, dislikes undertaking anything on a Friday, helping or being helped to salt at table, spilling salt or oil, letting bread fall, and breaking mirrors."

Soon after he met Miss Millbanke, a year before his marriage, he had proposed to her and been rejected. This meeting was accompanied by one of the omens for which he was always on the lookout and constantly discovering. It was at a ball and going up the steps of the mansion he stumbled and came near falling. He said to Moore, who was with him, that it meant "bad luck," and he recalled it afterwards.

Writing in later years of his nuptials, he says: "I was not so young when my father died but that I perfectly remember

him, and had very early a horror of matrimony from the sight of domestic broils; this feeling came to me very strongly at my wedding. Something whispered me that I was sealing my own death-warrant. I am a great believer in presentiments; Socrates' demon was not a fiction; 'Monk' Lewis had his monitor, and Napoleon many warnings."

He relates that he would never forget the day of his marriage and that at the last moment he would have retreated if he could have done so.

The bride was the only unconcerned person present; her mother cried, the bridegroom trembled like a leaf, made the wrong responses, and after the ceremony called her "Miss Millbanke." All these were portents of misfortune; but there was another, still more significant, that had preceded them.

"There is a singular history attached to the ring," he says. "The very day the match was concluded a ring of my mother's that had been lost was dug up by the gardener at Newstead. I thought that it was sent on purpose for the wedding; but my mother's marriage had not been a fortunate one, and this ring was doomed to be the seal of an unhappier union still."

As of so many other events in his life, there are curiously contradictory stories about what happened after the marriage while "the newly-weds" were on their wedding journey from Seeham to London. Medwin says Byron told him: "I was surprised at the arrangements for the journey, and somewhat out of humor to find a lady's-maid stuck between me and my bride." When Hobhouse, in 1824, read this, he "exclaimed fiercely that Medwin was an infamous impostor.

He had himself handed Lady Byron into the carriage, and could swear there was no maid in it."

A hundred things have been charged against him, and contradicted; and his own writings have contributed to the mystery and the uncertainty. He delighted in deceiving people, and would tell one person a thing and another the opposite, for the mischievous purpose of making trouble.

But there is no contradiction of the ludicrous story that on the wedding night, having gone to sleep with his bride, he had such an interruption to his repose as was characteristic of his frequently distorted dreams.

"A taper which burned in the room was casting a ruddy glare through the crimson curtains of the bed. He exclaimed in so loud a voice that he awakened Lady Byron, 'Good God! I am surely in hell!'"

For a while after the wedding the life of the young people moved contentedly, if not happily; and for him at times, at least when his dyspepsia permitted, it was blissful. With the cynicism that could often sneer at himself, he quoted Swift's saying that "no wise man ever married," and added, "but for a fool I think it is the most ambrosial of all future states."

In a month "the treacle-moon" had set; but his spouse and he "agreed to admiration." An expressive love-gesture on his part was to call her "Pippin," and in return she called him "Duck." They embraced his homely sister Augusta, with whom Lady Byron remained during his life on the friendliest terms, in their affectionate nomenclature under the name of "Goose."

Their days in Piccadilly, where they established them-



selves, were for a time quiet and their associations serene. This suited her, for she was not inclined to society; and it satisfied him, as it afforded him opportunity for his literary work. They gave no dinner parties and went out very little. He was hard run financially on account of debts that he had incurred in his earlier extravagant years and of the expenses of the law suit over the Rochedale property; and they lived economically. But the duns were haunting the house, and sometimes there were bailiffs. He told Hobhouse that his embarrassments were so great as to drive him half mad.

The first year of matrimony is the generally conceded time of greatest difficulty for young people to adjust themselves to each other's temperaments and idiosyncracies. In the beginning they got on fairly well together; and on the infrequent occasions when they attended social functions he was brilliant and gay, and when alone with her seemed cheerful and happy. But she realized, and told him, that he was often, when gayest, the most melancholy of mankind.

They were incompatible in their tastes, their temperaments and their sympathies. He was prone to brooding introspection and to somber silences. Mrs. Clermont, her former governess, visiting in the house, was familiar with the stories of his gallantries that every one knew, and Fanned Lady Byron's natural and suspicious jealousy with whispered innuendoes and dark hints. He was nervous and excitable under the irritating annoyance of creditors, and his dieting kept him in a condition of acute physical suffering and neurasthenic tension. She was sluggish and self-centered, and often very depressing to him; while she gave slight credence



LADY BYRON  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY KILMAN AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING

to the suggestions that came to her of his immoralities, she did not like the fuss women made over him. She especially disliked his continued association with her crack-brained and fascinating cousin, Lady Caroline Lamb.

She was "a learned lady" and she began to bore him terribly. Then their bickerings sprung up. He says of her: "She had the habit of drawing people's characters, after she had seen them once or twice. She wrote pages on pages about my character, but it was unlike as possible. She was governed by fixed rules and principles, squared mathematically. She would have made an excellent wrangler at Cambridge."

Wranglers at Cambridge and fixed rules, squared mathematically, were not at all to his taste.

Once when he was at work, she came into the room, and inquired: "Byron, am I in your way?" The very question was exasperating.

"Damnably!" he replied, and regretted the word as soon as it was spoken. It had "escaped him unconsciously, involuntarily." He "hardly knew what he said." But he attempted no explanation or apology to "the wrangler."

The Gight deviltry and bad temper were working in him; and his "dietetics" tortured him. He began to take his meals alone, which was a new ground of offense to her.

He had some reason for this solitary eating. His fear of obesity enabled him, by the exercise of tremendous will-power and self-denial, to starve himself; but his appetite continued unfailing and insistent. When palatable food was set before him, his desires overcame him and he would break out into an orgy of voracity. An example of one of these out-

breaks, after eating nothing for two days but biscuits and gum-mastic, was the fish supper he gave at his club after going with Moore to "see Kean." At this supper he ate three lobsters and drank four or five small liquor glasses of strong brandy, which he took "neat," following each with a draught of hot water. "After this," says Moore, "we had claret, of which having dispatched two bottles between us, we separated at about four o'clock in the morning."

The consequence of this repast was that he felt himself more surely in hell than when he awoke in the red glow of his wedding-night. Whenever he ate heartily or drank too much, he paid the penalty of violent pains.

Like many other young intellectuals of his day, Byron was a laudanum-drinker. Until going to Missolonghi and prior to that time during his riotous life in Venice he seldom had recourse to alcoholic liquors.

De Quincey, in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, mentions the names of a number of men "distinguished for talent, or for eminent station," who were known to him, directly or indirectly, as "opium-eaters," including "the eloquent and benevolent William Wilberforce; the late Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Isaac Milner; the first Lord Erskine; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and many others hardly less celebrated." Among these he includes Mr. Addington, brother of the first Lord Sidmouth, who he says "described to me the sensation which first drove him to the use of opium, in the very same words as the Dean of Carlisle, viz: 'that he felt as though rats were gnawing at the coats of his stomach.'"

Many of the "addicts" of the time, as did De Quincey himself, "ate opium" in the shape of pills or pellets. Others,

including Byron and Shelley, took it in the form of laudanum from a vial. De Quincey says that "it is in the faculty of mental vision, it is in the increased power of dealing with the shadowy and the dark, that the characteristic virtue of opium lies. Now, in the original higher sensibility is found some palliation for the practice of opium-eating; in the greater temptation is a greater excuse."

For Byron it meant only the alleviation of physical pain. He needed no such inspiration to his mental vision.

On December 10, 1815, Lady Byron gave birth to a daughter, Ada Augusta. Her second name was for his plain-faced and kindly half-sister, Mrs. Leigh, who was one of her sponsors at baptism. He had wanted a son; and, though in after years he proclaimed her "sole daughter of his house and heart," she was never known by him, as was little Allegra, the child of his illicit love, whom he had with him in his various palaces and Casas in Italy. Nor did Ada ever know him or even know of him for many years. His mother-in-law, Lady Noel, with implacable enmity, kept her during her childhood in entire ignorance of her father, and provided in her will that the child was not to see his portrait until her twenty-first year.

His restlessness had so grown upon him that before Ada's birth he had determined to go abroad. He had the old longing for unvisited lands, and the old memories of freedom and imagination in the classic air of Attica. Lady Byron was opposed to what she regarded as a wild-goose chase, when he had suggested that she should go with him. Why should she leave her father and mother in England, and undergo the discomforts of continental travel? And then,

too, she 'was soon to bear a child. She would none of it, and refused.

He proposed, after Ada's coming, that she should take the baby to her mother's; and she went when the infant was a little more than a month old. She hoped that he would visit Kirkby Mallory before he started to the continent; and he promised her to do so. But his condition of physical and mental health was now such that his suspicious wife grew alarmed about him; and she and his sister Augusta determined that they would endeavor to stop the laudanum-drinking. In this they were unsuccessful. Finally they concurred in the conclusion that he must be insane. On his side, he felt Lady Byron's spying attitude and perverse conduct to be irritating beyond endurance, and enough to drive him mad.

Mrs. Clermont, "the mischief maker," had been, as he was informed, the means of poisoning his mother-in-law's mind against him in greater degree even than that of his wife. She aroused his fury by a deed of which he had no doubt she was guilty.

"There was one act," he says, "unworthy of any but such a confidante. I allude to the breaking open my desk; a book was found in it that did not do much credit to my taste in literature, and some letters from a married woman with whom I had been intimate before my marriage. The use that was made of the letters was not unjustifiable, whatever may be thought of the breach of confidence that led to their discovery. Lady Byron sent them to the husband of the lady, who had the good sense to take no notice of their contents."

In his marital troubles his wife's father naturally espoused

the part of his daughter, and was even more stony-hearted than was his mother-in-law. Byron did not realize Sir Ralph Millbanke's attitude until later. He wrote to Moore: "In all this business, I am the sorriest for Sir Ralph. He and I are equally punished. . . . I shall be separated from *my* wife; he will retain *his*."

While he was at work in London on *The Siege of Corinth*, shut up in a dark room and denying himself to all visitors until he should have completed it, he was surprised one day by a doctor and a lawyer almost forcing themselves into his apartment. "I did not know till afterwards the real object of their visit," he says. "I thought their questions singular, frivolous, and somewhat importunate, if not impertinent; but what should I have thought if I had known that they were sent to provide proofs of my insanity?"

The report of the inquisitors was adverse to the expectation of those who employed them. His examiners did not consider him insane; and Lady Byron determined, upon the advice of her parents, her lawyers, and her medical advisers, to live no longer with a husband whose insanity might have afforded an excuse for his treatment of her, but who was impossible on the theory that he was of sound mind and merely by nature devilish.

She had undoubtedly married him, not for money but for love, and under the glamour of his fame, his beauty, and his social position. He had on his side married her for what he believed to be love and a regard for her aristocratic connections. He told his friend Moore, the "piano-poet," as he called him, that he had wedded for love and not for gear, and he emphasized the fact that Miss Millbanke was not wealthy.

It was one of his idiosyncrasies that in his affairs with women he always believed himself influenced solely by affection.

Matters had now come to a pass that in the opinion of her father, mother, and friends, demanded their parting. Lady Noel urged it. His sister Augusta protested, and said to her that it might cause him to kill himself. "So much the better," responded his mother-in-law; "it is not fit such men should live."

Whether Lady Byron desired the separation or not is one of the controverted questions that make interrogation marks throughout the whole affair. Mrs. Fletcher, her maid, wrote to her husband who was Byron's valet, that her mistress "was rolling on the floor in a paroxysm of grief at having promised to separate from Lord Byron"; and Hobhouse says that "her mind was perpetually in the balance between an adherence to what she had said and a feeling for that which she really wished to do."

But mother-in-law and father-in-law prevailed. Lady Byron wrote to Augusta: "You cannot think how severe my father is—much more than my mother."

Byron was bitterly reluctant to sign the deed of separation which Sir Ralph, acting in his daughter's behalf, insisted on; and even when it had been executed he regretted it. Three months after the signature, while he was on the Continent, he made overtures through one of his friends in England for a reconciliation and a reunion. They were contemptuously rejected. It was not until March, 1817, that he learned accidentally that a bill in chancery had been filed against him in the midst of the separation proceedings of April, 1816, by which Ada had been made a ward in chan-



cery. This was to prevent him from getting possession of her.

His affair with Clare Clairmont, beginning before he left England, was not unknown to the gossips and scandal-mongers in London; and the news of her presence with the Shelleys at Geneva, where Byron was then established in the Villa Diodati, had got back home. It was a poisoned arrow in the Kirkby Mallory camp.

Throughout all the talk and rumor and exaggerated surmise before he went abroad, many women of the *haut ton*, and especially those who were prominent as literary lights or who affected the literary pose, were still frantic about him; and some of them felt what Madame de Staël epigrammatically expressed when she read his *Fare Thee Well* verses: "How gladly I would have been unhappy in Lady Byron's place!"

In a letter that he wrote to his wife in November, 1821, but which he never sent, he said: "Notwithstanding everything, I considered our reunion not impossible for more than a year after the separation; but I then gave up the hope entirely and forever."

The upshot of it all was that, despite his proffered offer of a reconciliation, induced by his constitutional habit of regretting his acts after they were undertaken or accomplished and influenced in no small degree by his sentiment for Ada, he had been so bored by "mathematical rules and fixed principles," that he finally felt a lawless Gight joy in being rid of her. Moreover, was not the lovely Clare, with her first freshness of youth and charm that had had no time to pall on his fickle fancy, traveling to meet him at Geneva?

Whatever the real cause of the final separation, which has never been disclosed, it was not that asserted so many years after his death by Mrs. Beecher Stowe in the "hideous story," pronounced by Leslie Stephen in 1886 "absolutely incredible." Though it was affirmed afterwards by his grandson, the eccentric Earl of Lovelace, in *Astarte*, the book is a fantastic argument deduced from letters of unconvincing interpretation, and from a correlation of Byron's poems that is only comparable to the methods by which, through picking out phrases and lines and words, writers have sought to prove that Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare. Mr. Chew, the American scholar and authority on Byron, in his *Byron in England* says of his letters in *Astarte*: "Save one sentence in one letter (an allusion to Lucretia Borgia) there is not a line in them capable of being perverted by the most unhealthy imagination into evidence against Byron and Mrs. Leigh."

Byron said to a friend, shortly before his death at Missolonghi, that the reasons for the parting were "too simple to be easily found out."

The finger of circumstance points to the love affair with Clare Clairmont as one of the most powerful influences that finally ended their married life.

When he set out on this visit to meet Clare at Geneva, he went with a cloud of popular disfavor hanging over him. "I need not tell you," he says in his *Conversations*, "of the obloquy and opprobrium that were cast upon my name when our separation was made public. I once made a list from the journals of the day of the different worthies, ancient and modern, to whom I was compared. I remember a few: Nero, Apicius, Epicurus, Caligula, Heliogabalus, Henry the



CLAIR CLAIRMONT  
FROM THE PAINTING BY AMELIA CURRAN

Eighth, and lastly, the —. All my former friends, even my cousin, George Byron, who had been brought up with me and whom I loved as a brother, took my wife's part. He followed the stream, when it was strongest against me, and can never expect anything from me; he shall never touch a sixpence of mine. I was looked upon as the worst of husbands, the most abandoned and wicked of men; and my wife as a suffering angel, an incarnation of all the virtues and perfections of the sex. I was abused in the public prints, made the common talk of private companies, hissed as I went to the House of Lords, insulted in the streets, afraid to go to the theatre."

In this diatribe he failed to mention many other things that had conduced to his condemnation by the smug conservatism of his countrymen:—his reckless and indiscreet conduct as a participant in the highest social life of England; his not undeserved reputation as an irreligious and immoral member of an ancient and self-poised aristocracy; his outspoken avowal of political principles then tremendously unpopular, though common enough among the young men of genius of his day. He was a radical in politics and religion. He had flown in the face of prevalent British sentiment in his proclamation of admiration for Napoleon and for George Washington, both detested by the English masters of public opinion; and, in addition to all this, he had committed the offense of publishing poems of a new order, which, while they made the shocked moralists of his time gasp and stare, had achieved a distinction and success beyond the work of any author of his generation.

Success on the part of a man who ought to be jailed is, in

the eyes of the jealous and the unsuccessful, damnable and unforgivable.

Macaulay, in an article on Moore's book, in the *Edinburgh Review*, in 1831, said: "It is not every day that the savage envy of aspiring dunces is gratified by the agonies of such a spirit and the degradation of such a name. . . . The howl of contumely followed him across the sea, up the Rhine, over the Alps; it gradually waxed fainter; it died away. . . . His poetry became more popular than it ever had been; and his complaints were read with tears by thousands who had never seen his face."

## THE SECOND PART

### *The Skinner Street House and Italy*

“The morning dawned with fragrance rare;  
The May-breeze from the West  
Just fanned the sleepy olives, where  
She heard and I confessed:—  
My hair entangled with her hair,  
Her breast strained to my breast.”

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON: *The Three  
Friends (From the French)*



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SEILLIN  
FROM THE PAINTING BY S. J. STUMP IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

## XII

### A MAN WITH A MAID

**I**N 1812 there lived in Skinner Street, Holborn Hill, London, a family with two members of which the threads of Byron's later life were destined to become curiously intertwined. The head of this household was William Godwin, philosopher, novelist, and prolific miscellaneous writer, a mild-mannered rebel against the accepted conventionalities of English political, economic, and religious life, and a gentleman whose pecuniary necessities were chronic and often clamorous. He was an author of no ordinary stamp or pretensions, and possessed a fecund imagination and a gift of literary expression which ranked him as one of the ablest writers of his time.

He had been married twice. His first wife, who had died fourteen years earlier, was Mary Wollstonecraft, herself an essayist of distinction, an advocate even at that early date of the "rights" of women, now achieved even in Turkey, and the original of "Marguerite" in Godwin's novel *St. Leon*, where the description of her has been accounted as containing some of the "most beautiful passages in English fiction."

The members of Godwin's family then living with him were: his second wife, who when he married her was the widow Clairmont; his daughter Mary, by Mary Wollstonecraft, who had died in giving her birth; Fanny Imlay, also Mary



Wollstonecraft's daughter by an American named Imlay with whom she had lived prior to the time of her marriage to Godwin; the Clairmont children of Mrs. Godwin's first marriage, Charles and Clara Mary Jane, later known as Clare; and William Godwin, his son by the second wife.

This mixed assortment of young people might naturally have been, but was not, inharmonious; for Godwin's temperament, in spite of unpaid obligations and duns and occasional anticipations of imprisonment for debt at the hands of his creditors, was one of usually undisturbed calm, and he wielded a kindly influence on his household. The three girls and two boys got along quite well together, barring the usual quarrels of incongruous children in the same house. The chief cause of disagreement was the shrewish tongue and nagging habits of Mrs. Godwin, lately Mrs. Clairmont. This lady, who has come down in literary story as Mary Jane Godwin, imagined herself the practical member of the Godwin domestic ménage, and conducted a small publishing business known as the "Juvenile Library," to which Charles and Mary Lamb, who were Godwin's friends, were the chief contributors and gave it fame through the *Tales from Shakespeare* and *The Adventures of Ulysses*. But neither the philosopher nor his wife had any business capacity; and under the management of the female member, who was Lamb's pet abomination and whose green spectacles he pictured on a page of gentle ridicule, it soon went to pot.

Godwin's revolutionary book, *Political Justice*, had attracted the attention of Shelley when he was a boy at Eton; and the unconventional youth wrote him a letter two years later telling him how it had opened to his mind fresh and

more extensive vistas; that it materially influenced his character, and that he rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. Long before he met him, Shelley had made for himself an idol of Godwin and worshiped at his shrine.

When Shelley went to Oxford in his sixteenth year, and there took up the study of metaphysics with a newly acquired friend, who possessed the democratic name of Thomas Jefferson Hogg, his earlier interest in Godwin's book was renewed. It gave him high ideas and awoke in him serious reflections on the social condition of England, out of which grew the wild spirit of revolt against man's inhumanity to man that won for him the blasting condemnation of the censorious when he proclaimed it to the world in his poetry. Shelley blamed Christianity no less than the prevalent social system for the everlasting evils of poverty and injustice and crime and got himself and his friend Hogg expelled from Oxford, gaining at the same time his father's ineluctable condemnation and dislike by writing and publishing *The Necessity of Atheism*, a foolish and youthful ebullition that sprung from boyish vanity and uncontrolled self-will. He and Hogg, who paraded the public places of the University, dressed in bizarre costumes and posing as philosophers whose mission it was to reform an evil world, soon found themselves regarded by students and dons and officials alike as two unmitigated young asses and disturbers of the slumbrous public peace of the place, and were incontinently kicked out.

With no revenues of his own, and with no means of making even the pretense of a living, Shelley followed up this foolish exploit by another equally foolish. He ran away to Edinburgh with Harriet Westbrook, a pretty child as inexperi-

enced as himself, and married her. On his journey north he wrote to Thomas Jefferson Hogg that he was "in pecuniary distress," and earnestly solicited a loan of £10; and Hogg, following them with the enthusiasm of youthful friendship, was received with a warm welcome, and given a bed in their lodgings.

After various wanderings from place to place, during which Shelley had a row with Hogg, who had indiscreetly but naturally fallen in love with Harriet during her husband's temporary absence, the young couple went to Cumberland and met Southey, whose wife Shelley thought stupid, though he liked her tea-cakes. There he also met De Quincey, who has left a pretty picture of the guilelessness and charm of Harriet and a deep damnation of Shelley as an unspeakable atheist.

The upshot of the marriage of these two innocents was that, after some three or more unconventional years of married life in which occurred the birth of two babies, Shelley was smitten with a more violent passion upon meeting Mary Godwin.

He had once seen her as a child at Godwin's house, when he went there on the occasion of his first visit to his demi-god and philosopher; but she then made no impression on him. She had recently spent some time with friends in Scotland, where she was glad to stay on account of her dislike for her virago of a stepmother. On her return, no longer a child, but grown-up, pretty, gifted, attractive, and with unsatisfied longings and affections stirring her budding bosom, she found the unspeakable Mrs. Godwin, as before, uncongenial and extremely jealous of her. Clare Clairmont,

willful, rebellious, daring and bewitching, with a lovely face and an enthusiastic nature, had now come home from school. She was a little younger than Mary; and they were congenial and much dependent on each other for society. Mary was romantic and imaginative, and Clare, with her lively spirits and quick wit, was ready to encourage her stepsister in every adventure, and to take her part in every revolt against Mrs. Godwin's arbitrary exercise of authority. Fanny Imlay, older and more retiring than the younger girls,—“the good angel of the house”—was no sharer in the intimacies of the other two, each of whom in her different way was on the lookout for girlish romance and sensation.

Hogg one day met Shelley in Cheapside and walked with him to Godwin's house. They enquired for the philosopher, but he was not at home. Hogg gives a dramatic account of what followed.

While they waited for Godwin in his library, “the door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called ‘Shelley!’ And he darted out of the room like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-headed, pale indeed, with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at the time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two—and then returned. ‘Godwin is out; there is no use waiting,’ he said. So we continued our walk along Holborn. ‘Who was that, pray?’ I asked, ‘a daughter?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘A daughter of William Godwin?’ ‘The daughter of Godwin and Mary.’”

Mary Godwin was then a girl of sixteen, devoted to her brilliant mother's memory, pensive and intellectual and full

of sentiment. In order to avoid the observation of Godwin and of her stepmother, her love-making with Shelley took place at her mother's grave in St. Pancras churchyard. She knew that Shelley had a wife.

## XIII

### A MAN AND TWO MAIDS

SHELLEY'S Harriet did not realize that she had lost him. In her simplicity she could not understand him, and she was bewildered when he invited her to come to London so that he might tell her of his newly formed passion for Mary.

His friend Peacock says: "The separation did not take place by mutual consent. I cannot think Shelley ever so represented it. He never did so to me; and the account which Harriet herself gave me of the entire proceedings was decidedly contradictory to any such supposition. He might well have said, after seeing Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 'Ut vidi! ut perii!' Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could ever present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him laboring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind suffering 'like a little kingdom the nature of an insurrection.' His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum and said 'I never part from

this.' He added, 'I am always repeating your lines from Sophocles:

“Man's happiest lot is not to be;  
And when we tread life's thorny steep,  
More blest are they, who earliest free,  
Descend to Earth's eternal sleep.”

“Again he said, more calmly, ‘Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.’ I said, ‘It always appeared to me that you were very fond of Harriet.’ Without affirming or denying this, he answered, ‘But you did not know how I hated her sister.’”

This sister was Eliza Westbrook, who soon after their marriage had attached herself to them like a barnacle to a ship, and had continued a member of their household until they could stand her no longer and dismissed her.

Shelley was a devotee of love; but he spoke of marriage, quoting Godwin, as “hateful, detestable.” “A kind of inefable sickening disgust seizes my mind when I think of this most despotic, most unrequired fetter which prejudice has forged to confine its energies.”

Godwin, the philosopher, in violation of his anti-matrimonial theory, had married Mary Wollstonecraft and, after her death, Mrs. Clairmont. Shelley, when he had got his “noble animal” away from her father's house, had very shortly after their arrival in Edinburgh been “joined in holy matrimony” with her by the Reverend Mr. Robertson, minister of the Church of Scotland, “at his dwelling house in that

city." It was a concession to the opinion of society on the sacrament of marriage, which he scorned, and a recognition of the Christian dogma, which he detested.

Godwin was now to see put into practice by his young and sincere disciple the anti-nuptial theory that he had preached and that he had himself disregarded.

A little more than three years after Shelley had eloped to Scotland with Harriet Westbrook, while still her husband he ran away with Mary Godwin.

The only apology for him is that he was a visionary unfettered by the creeds that bind men of common clay and conventional opinion.

Leaving her father's shop in Skinner Street at five o'clock in the morning of an August day, Mary found Shelley waiting for her at the corner of Hatton Garden with a post-chaise, as he had formerly waited for Harriet when he carried her off to Edinburgh.

Clare, who was cognizant of the love affair that had been going on between Mary and Shelley, regarded the proposed elopement with warm approval. She was romantic and adventurous; and she was familiar with her stepfather's views about marriage. Life was deadly dull and drab in the house in Skinner Street where the sedate philosopher spent his days and nights in studying and writing, where her mother was eternally nagging, where Fanny Imlay was a domestic kill-joy, and where the two young girls were feverish with the imaginations and desires in which young girls have indulged through immemorial centuries.

Clare admired the beautiful, freckle-faced and unconventional Shelley; and she was Mary's intimate and confi-



dante. The whole thing was a great lark; and Clare would have been delighted if she too might have found a suitor to elope with.

The young lovers knew that she possessed the accomplishment of speaking French, which neither of them spoke; and their destination was Paris. They asked Clare to accompany them; and had no difficulty in persuading her to get into the post-chaise and journey with them to Dover in the hot August morning. Lifting the skirt of her holiday satin dress, she stepped in.

Hazlitt, writing ten years later of Shelley's appearance, says: "His person was a type and shadow of his genius. His complexion, fair, golden, freckled, seemed transparent with an inward light, and his spirit within him

"So divinely wrought  
That you might almost say his body thought."

"He reminded those who saw him of some of Ovid's fables. His form, graceful and slender, drooped like a flower in the breeze."

Even Godwin, before knowing him, had been won by his beauty. He told Charles Clairmont, after once seeing him on the street, that he "was so beautiful it was a pity he was so wicked."

Mary was overcome by the heat on the way, so that it was found necessary for her to rest at each stage of the journey. This gave Shelley great anxiety, as he was apprehensive of pursuit; and on reaching Dover in the late afternoon, instead of waiting until next day for the packet, he hired a small boat to cross the Channel. The weather was foul, a thunder-

storm arose, and the boat came near upsetting. They got into Calais at sunrise, the romantic and adventurous Clare undismayed and eager, and Mary, exhausted and asleep, with her head on Shelley's knees.

His fear of pursuit was not unfounded. Mrs. Godwin, learning of the elopement soon after their departure, with little regard for her stepdaughter was bent on extricating Clare from the scandal. She too hired a post-chaise and, in hot pursuit, reached Dover in time for the packet on which they had expected to cross. She caught up with them on the other side at Calais, and took Clare with her to a hotel. Mother and daughter spent the night together, and Mrs. Godwin implored the girl to accompany her home. But entreaties and threats were alike in vain. The high-spirited and rebellious Clare returned to her companions, and her mother went back to the house in Skinner Street.

Shelley and the girls proceeded to Paris. Here he found himself without a penny. He had had a similar experience when he ran off with Harriet Westbrook. The thought of money never concerned him until he found himself in a situation where he must have it. He went out and sold his watch and chain and managed to borrow a few additional napoleons from a trusting Frenchman whom he knew. With a part of the money they made an investment which proved an unprofitable one. Mary tells about it in her "Diary" with amusing detail.

"Jane (Clare) and Shelley go to the ass-merchant's. We buy an ass."

She continues the story of their journey:

"We set out to Charenton in the evening, carrying the

ass, who was weak and unfit for labor, like the miller and his son."

When they arrived at Charenton, Clare exclaimed: "Oh, this is beautiful enough. Let us live here!"

This was her exclamation in every new scene; and, as each surpassed the one before, she cried out, "I am glad we did not live at Charenton, but let us live here!"

The ass was unequal to the task of carrying even their luggage, so they sold him and bought a mule. Shelley sprained his ankle and had to ride, while the girls in their satin dresses walked.

Mary writes in her "Diary":

"We arrive at Lucerne, dine. . . . read Shakespeare. Interrupted by Jane's horrors; pack up. We have engaged a boat for Basle."

She omits no occasion in the "Diary" of alluding to Clare's "horrors."

Clare was given to "horrors." She had nightmares, and walked in her sleep. In later passages in the "Diary," when Clare had begun to get on Mary's nerves by her fondness for Shelley, who talked with her "concerning her character," and by her somnambulistic performances, Mary's affection for her sensibly diminished.

The party came to Troyes, and thence after various inconveniences which they encountered in the high spirit of care-free youth, they arrived at Brunnen, on Lake Lucerne. Here Shelley, with his usual ineptitude for business, engaged two rooms for a term of six months. They remained in them only two days and nights. Again they were out of money; so they went back to England, arriving without enough to



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

FROM THE PAINTING BY AMELIA CURRAN IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

pay their passage over, or their hackney-coach fare to the lodgings that they took. To meet these imperative debts Shelley had to procure funds from the deserted Harriet, to whom he had transferred a portion of his meager income before going abroad.

"Shelley calls on Harriet," writes Mary in the "Diary," "who is certainly a very odd creature."

The sentimental journey of the three young idiots not only cost Shelley money which he did not have, and yet had to scrape together somehow, but, what was worse, it started the wicked tongue of scandal a-wagging at a lively rate. His high social connections, and his career at Oxford, made him an interesting subject of gossip. Godwin especially felt the sting of the stories that began to be circulated, which were, among others, that he had sold his daughter, Mary, for £800, and had disposed of his wife's daughter, Clare, to the gay young author of *Queen Mab* for the lesser sum of £700. But Shelley, who was desperately in love with Mary, as she with him, established himself and the girls in lodgings in Cavendish Square, to which Mrs. Godwin and Fanny Imlay came, once or twice after their arrival, in nocturnal prowls and peeped through the shutters at them.

The situation of the lovers was now deplorable. They were penniless themselves; Harriet was running up bills at shops and hotels and sending her creditors to Shelley. Godwin, in whom Shelley had never lost faith as a moral and intellectual guide, was threatened with bankruptcy and constantly importuning him for financial assistance, and yet refusing to see him. Shelley's friends were sponging on him daily, to live at his expense, while he himself was in

constant evasive flight from the duns and bum-bailiffs, and, staying away from home, was meeting Mary by appointment on street corners or at St. Pancras,—anywhere, so as not to be seen by the officers of the law.

Clare, forbidden to return to Godwin's house so long as she maintained her friendship with the Shelleys, continued with them. Her presence added to their anxieties through her financial dependence on them; and the jealous Mary found her close association with Shelley very disagreeable. But her cheerfulness, her sense of humor, her kindly impulses, helped them both to endure their vicissitudes; and she was always ready for an enthusiastic participation in any of their impossible projects and harum-scarum enterprises. Her companionship stimulated and enlivened Shelley, to whom she was an indefatigable companion in his walks and wanderings now that Mary became less and less able to go about, but she bored Mary dreadfully.

"She did not bring to Mary," says Mrs. Marshall, who wrote the very sympathetic *Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, "as she did to Shelley, the charm of novelty; nor does the unfolding of one girl's character present to another girl, whose character is also in process of development, such attractive problems as it does to a young and speculative man. Mary was too noble by nature and too perfectly in accord with Shelley to indulge in actual jealousy of Jane's companionship with him; still, she must often have had a weary time when these two were scouring the town on their multifarious errands; misunderstandings, also, would occur, only to be removed by long and patient explanations. Jane (or Clara, as about this time she elected to call herself), was

hardly more than a child, and in some respects a very childish child. Excitable and nervous, she had no idea of putting constraint upon herself for others' sake, and gave her neighbors very little rest, as she preferred any number of scenes to humdrum quiet. She and Shelley would sit up half the night, amusing themselves with wild speculations, natural and supernatural, till she would go off into hysterics or trances or, when she had at last gone to bed, would walk in her sleep, see phantoms, and frighten them all with her terrors."

These antics of Clare's are detailed frequently in Mary's "Diary," probably with exaggeration.

## XIV

### AGAPEMONE

**W**HILE Shelley and Mary Godwin were living together his wife, Harriet, gave birth to a son. She wrote to her friend, Miss Nugent: "He is an eight months child, and very like his unfortunate father, who is more depraved than ever. . . . Money, now, and not philosophy, is the grand spring of his actions."

By the sale to his father of a reversionary interest under the will of a relation for £7000, and an agreement with him for an annuity of £1000 a year for life, Shelley found himself temporarily in fairly easy circumstances. He sent Harriet at once £200 to pay her debts and settled on her £200 a year.

In Mary's "Diary," edited and published by her after his death, she and Shelley had made alternate entries. In it he tells of his conversations with Clare on various subjects, including "oppression" and "reform," of her giving him her conception of the "subterranean community of women," and of how, after saying good-night at one o'clock, he goes and sits by Mary's bedside and reads. He hears rapid footsteps descend the stair, and looking out sees Clare with distorted face and drawn forehead, exhibiting every expression of terror. She had had one of her nightmares. They sat by the fire, and he soothed her by reading and talking to her till



daylight. Mary, in her turn, makes her own entries in the "Diary," and between the lines is legible a morbidly jealous aversion to Clare.

Mary became the mother of a girl, who lived only a few days. On a ten days' excursion which she took with Shelley, Peacock, and Clare's brother Charles, they spent a night and a day at Oxford. Here, after some sight-seeing, Charles Clairmont wrote to Clare, who had remained in London, that they visited "the very rooms where the two noted infidels, Shelley and Hogg (now happily excluded the society of the present residents) pored with the incessant and unwearied application of the alchemist over the certified and natural boundaries of human knowledge."

Clare, young, impressionable, and thirsting for adventure, had observed with deeply sympathetic interest the love-romance of Mary and Shelley. Her imagination caught fire at it, and saw nothing wrong in the happy relations which her stepsister had assumed with a married man. She had heard Godwin inveigh against the matrimonial superstition; and Shelley, whom she greatly liked and admired, had shown her, in his devotion to Mary, that love was the greatest thing in the world, and that nothing else made any difference. Why should she not engage in a like adventure?

Byron, then in the early glow of his literary success, had an interest in the Drury Lane theater. She knew about him, as did every one in London. She daringly determined to meet him, and on the plea that she desired to go on the stage, after writing to him, she went to the theater and made his acquaintance. He had the reputation of being charmingly wicked; and charming wickedness was alluring to her young

imagination. She looked on the adventure as a thrilling opportunity of escape from the drabness of a life of loneliness and boredom in Skinner Street that had nothing in it for her. She was a tall handsome brunette, of vigorous physique, full of life, piquant and entertaining. Byron found in her a responsive sentimentality that welcomed his earliest advances.

There is no record evidence of whether their love-making began on the occasion of her first approaching him, without introduction, at the theater, or if it was at another later meeting. At all events, she did not go on the stage but into his arms.

Of their early associations Clare said many years afterward: "I was young and vain and poor. He was famous beyond all precedent—so famous that people, and especially young people, hardly considered him as a man at all, but rather as a god. His beauty was as haunting as his fame, and he was all powerful in the direction in which my ambition turned. It seems to me almost needless to say that the attentions of a man like this, with all London at his feet, very quickly completely turned the head of a girl in my position; and when you recollect that I was brought up to consider marriage not only as a useless but absolutely sinful custom that only bigotry made necessary, you will scarcely wonder at the result."

She never offered the excuse that Mary had set her the example in her relations with Shelley.

It was about the time when Byron was in the midst of his troubles with his wife, and was arranging for his journey abroad. Shelley, now in a financial condition that enabled

him to go again to the continent with a better assurance of comfort than on his first brief visit, had determined to sojourn for a while in Switzerland. Taking Mary and his little son William, with Clare as their companion, he set out for Paris, whence they journeyed by their former route through Troyes to Neufchâtel, and finally reached Geneva. Ten days after the arrival of the Shelleys and Clare at the hotel at Secheron, a suburb of Geneva, Byron appeared there with his caravan of servants and animals.

Before leaving England he had written to his wife, asking her to be kind to Augusta, "almost the last being you have left me to part with"; and with the letter he had sent her for Ada a ring containing the hair of the Scottish king from whom, in his maternal line, he was descended.

When he signed his name on the hotel guest-book on arriving at Geneva with Hobhouse, he put his age down as "one hundred."

It was a pre-arranged meeting between him and Clare.

He had impressed on her in England that when she should join him on the continent she must on no account come alone, or without protection; and so she had urged Shelley to select Geneva as his destination. She wrote Byron from Paris to tell him that she was so far on her way, accompanied by "the whole tribe of Otaheite philosophers."

Mary's "Diary" is lacking in personal gossip, and there is nothing in it about Clare's adventure with Byron. It is in Shelley's entries that Clare is oftenest mentioned. Mary's biographer insists, with plausible arguments, that neither Mary nor Shelley knew anything about the arrangement to meet at Geneva.

It is usually supposed that the two poets had never encountered each other before; though previous to that time the author of *Childe Harold* had received from the author of *Queen Mab* a copy of his poem, and had written to him a letter expressing admiration of its opening lines. But Clare many years afterwards narrated with circumstantial detail how she and Byron, soon after their own meeting, had gone to Marlow when Shelley and Mary were living there, and had seen them at a tavern in the village.

Two days after Byron's arrival the poets appear in close association, and soon developed an intimate friendship. This was not in accordance with Byron's usual custom, and tends to indicate an earlier acquaintance.

The city was, as always, full of English tourists and pleasure seekers, with whom he was in no frame of mind to come in contact.

"Among our countrymen," he writes, "I made no new acquaintances; Shelley, Monk Lewis and Hobhouse were almost the only English people I saw. No wonder; I showed a distaste for society at that time, and went little among the Genevese; besides, I could not speak French."

But the language of love is universal; and the guests of the hotel Secheron were soon interested and inquisitive about the English Lord and the blond young poet with their two pretty companions.

Shelley took a cottage on the Lake, some little distance out of the city; and ostensibly in order to escape both English and Genevese curiosity Byron moved to the Villa Diodati near the Shelleys' place of residence, where he established himself with his equipage of seven servants, five carriages,

nine horses, a monkey, a bull dog and a mastiff, two cats, three pea-fowls and a coop of hens.

Captain Medwin, who tells of this extraordinary assemblage of vehicles and animals, adds: "These and all his books, consisting of a very large library of modern works (for he bought all the best that came out), together with a vast quantity of furniture, might well be termed, with Cæsar, 'Impedimenta.' "

Unlike Shelley, who had fetched no other baggage than the two young girls and a baby with its nurse, and was living in great simplicity in his modest cottage, Byron had no women in his entourage at the villa. He made up the deficiency by frequent visits to the Shelleys, which were no less frequently returned. He bought a boat in which he and Shelley would take Mary and Clare, and sometimes the young Italian doctor, Polidori, whom he had brought with him from England, in moonlight excursions on the Lake.

The intimacy between the two households grew apace; and there were few days and nights when visits were not interchanged. It is only fair to believe that the impetuous and reckless Clare was genuinely and innocently in love with Byron, and that she thought that the relations which they had established, though less frank and open, were in no respect different from those of Shelley with Mary.

Each gentleman was a married man, with a wife at home in England, though Byron was legally separated from his, and Shelley was not. But Clare was less discreet than Godwin's daughter, or more indifferent to local public opinion; for she sometimes slipped away from the cottage to visit alone the Villa Diodati. She acted as Byron's amanuensis

and wrote his manuscripts for him. People began to wag their tongues and the story got abroad that some peasants who worked in a vineyard that lay between the two houses had seen emerge from the Villa in the early morning a young lady who in her haste, as she returned to the cottage, lost her slipper which they picked up and took to the mayor.

In the three or four months of their stay at Geneva, the love affair with Clare lost its savor for the fickle and easily bored Byron. He still carried in his mind memories of his little daughter, Ada, and he had not wholly surrendered the hope that something might yet bring about a reconciliation and reunion between him and his mathematically minded wife. He had no doubt that the story of his *liaison* with Clare while they were in London had reached the ears of Lady Byron through her confidential friend, Mrs. Clermont; and there were too many English people at Geneva not to send back to London news of the interesting goings-on at the Shelley cottage and the Villa Diodati. The situation began to pall on him. Some of the most beautiful and high-born young women of the English aristocracy had laid their hearts down before him to be trampled on. Why should he keep up, to his own obvious disadvantage, this love affair with the daughter of a London coffee-house keeper? Her beauty and vivacity and wit and gayety had allured him in the early stages of the game; but she was not the first and only one. He had undoubtedly believed himself in love with her; now he had come to find in the episode what Shelley calls in *The Skylark* "love's sad satiety." He knew that she was an expectant mother; and this caused him remorse and added to

his annoyance. He began by being indifferent; his indifference grew into dislike, and in the developments of later months became a positive hatred.

“Man’s love is of man’s life a thing apart,  
’Tis woman’s whole existence,”

was his theory about such matters, though not yet expressed in this language in *Don Juan*. The stale affair had got to be most damnably unpleasant.

## XV

### THE WAGES OF SIN

**E**ARLY in the following year Byron proceeded to Venice, after visiting a number of other places in Italy with Hobhouse, who had come with him, and his friend Scrope Davies, who arrived at Geneva soon after the Shelleys and Clare had left for home.

The City of the Doges continued to be his principal place of residence from 1817 to 1820; and here, in the interval of a more protracted and conspicuous love affair, he devoted himself with a restless energy and industry, that seem to accord ill with his dissipations during a part of the period, to the composition of his poems.

Shelley, in the meantime, after a sojourn of some three or four months in the cottage by Lake Lemman, had taken Mary, his little son William, and Clare, and returned to London. Clare, with her illusions shattered and nothing to look forward to save the coming of her baby, was not unwilling to go back; and it is to the honor of the Shelleys that they sheltered her and cared for her thenceforward, until his death, with a noble unselfishness on his part and an apparent generous kindness on that of his wife.

On their arrival in London they parted, Shelley going to visit his friend Peacock at Marlow in Bucks, while the two girls with William and his Swiss nurse, Elise Foggi, went to Bath.



Shelley's wife, Harriet, after his elopement, had taken their little daughter, Ianthe, and returned to the home of her father, John Westbrook, where she had given birth to Shelley's son, Charles Bysshe; and she continued to live there with the two children for the remainder of her brief existence, except for a short period prior to her shocking death.

When he had come into an income from the sale of his reversionary interest to his father, Harriet had asked Shelley to give her an additional allowance to the £200 annuity he settled on her, for the two children. He refused, but said he would take Ianthe and provide for her. The deserted wife declined the offer on the ground of his principles, which had theretofore not seemed objectionable to her; and he then threatened to withdraw her annuity.

By a will made shortly after his return from Switzerland he appointed Byron and Thomas Love Peacock his executors and trustees and bequeathed of his estate in expectancy £6000 in trust for Harriet during her life, and £5000 for the children, to be paid them on arriving at the age of twenty-one. He also bequeathed to Clare £6000, and an annuity to be purchased with an additional £6000; and to Byron and Peacock each £500 and an annuity. The residue of his estate in expectancy he gave to "Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, of Skinner Street, in the City of London, spinster."

Two distressing tragedies occurred soon after his arrival in England. The first of these was the suicide of Fanny Imlay, the half-sister of Mary. Unable to stand the temper and tongue of her shrewish stepmother, and in the loneliness resulting from the continued absence of both Mary and Clare,

she went to Swansea, on her way to visit an aunt in Ireland, and was found dead in bed at an inn there. A bottle of laudanum was discovered nearby, and a note in which she stated she had long determined to end the existence of one whose birth was unfortunate and whose life had caused pain to those who had endeavored to promote her welfare.

The young philosophers of the period, male and female, seem to have had no fear of shaking off the mortal coil when harsh circumstance stared them in the face. Shelley, in some mood of depression, once requested Trelawny to procure prussic acid for him, which he called "that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest." Lacking religion, they regarded suicide as justifiable.

Mrs. Godwin put the blame of Fanny Imlay's act of self-destruction on Shelley, saying that all three of the girls, Mary, Clare and Fanny, had been in love with him, and that Fanny killed herself on account of her jealousy of Mary.

Scarcely two months elapsed before he received the still more startling and shocking news of the death of his wife by drowning in the Serpentine River in London, a case of self-destruction like that of the Imlay girl, though by a different method.

Harriet had left her father's house some weeks earlier, and under the name of Smith had taken lodgings, two days before the return of Shelley from Geneva, in Hans Place, Chelsea. Two months later she disappeared, and her whereabouts remained unknown to any one where she lodged until after some four or five weeks her body was found in the river.

On the day when he heard of her death, Shelley went to

claim his and Harriet's two children from their grandfather, John Westbrook; and on the day following he wrote to Mary, who was then at Bath with her little son William and Clare, that he had spent a time of agonizing sensations "such as the contemplation of vice and folly and hard-heartedness exceeding all conception must produce."

This indictment is believed to have included in its intention Harriet herself and her sister Eliza, who wanted John Westbrook's property, and also Westbrook for his apparent indifference to his unfortunate daughter.

It was said by Godwin, who no doubt regarded Harriet's end as affording the desirable opportunity of his making Mary "an honest woman," that he had evidence of his wife's unfaithfulness to Shelley four months before he had eloped with Mary; but Godwin's statement is hardly credible in the light of the adverse testimony of those who knew her well.

Trelawny says, "I was assured by the new friends who knew both Shelley and his wife—Hookham, who kept the great library in Bond Street, Jefferson Hogg, Peacock and one of the Godwins,—that Harriet was perfectly innocent of all offense."

Southey, some years after Harriet's death, with smug self-sufficiency took him to task for the occurrence, accusing him of guilt towards both his first and second wife. Shelley, in his reply to Southey's charge, said: "I take God to witness, if such a Being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself, if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence—that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended; the consequences you allude to flowed in no re-

spect from me. If you were my friend, I could tell you a history that would make you open your eyes; but I shall certainly never make the public my confidant."

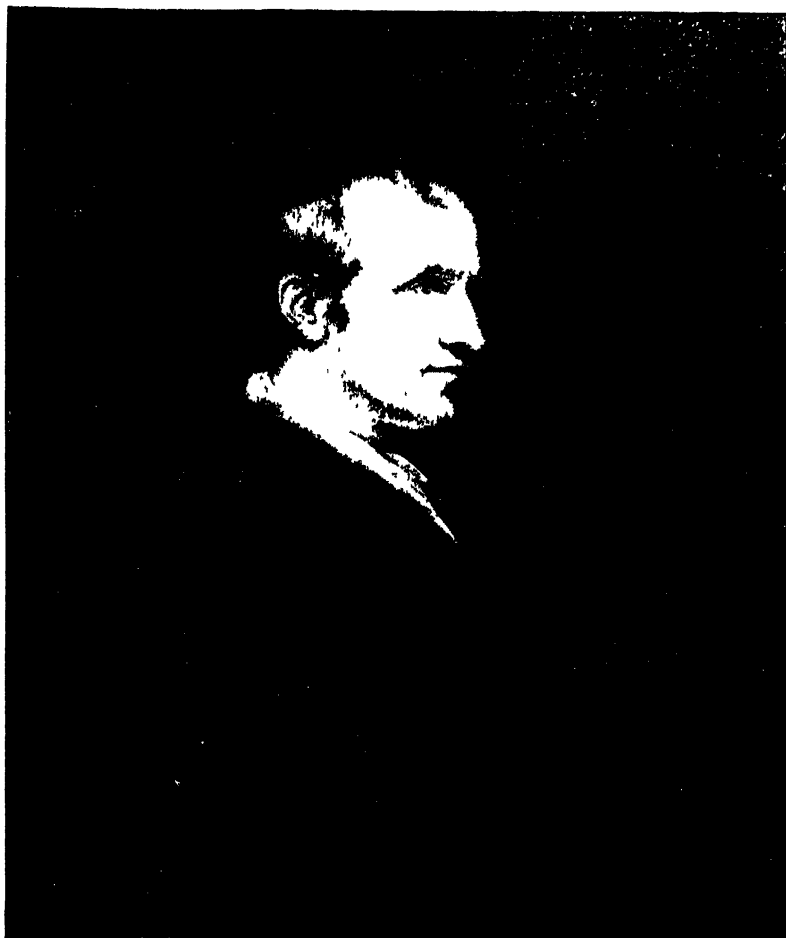
Leigh Hunt intimates that Harriet's death caused Shelley remorse; and that he felt he had made a serious mistake in marrying her, which resulted, as might have been expected, in misery and misfortune to them both.

Harriet was twenty years old when she died. Shelley told his friend, Miss Hitchener, who spent a long time with them after they were first married, that "suicide was her favorite theme"; and Hogg, who knew her well, observed that even in the days of her apparent happiness her mind constantly dwelt on self-destruction.

Godwin, still forgetful of his theories about marriage when applicable to himself, immediately indicated a strong desire that Shelley and Mary should be legally united without delay. Mary, though professing an indifference to public opinion, felt that this step would restore her to her father's good graces, and acquiesced. On December 30th, 1816, "Percy Bysshe Shelley of the Parish of Saint Mildred, Bread Street, London, widower, and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, of the City of Bath, a minor," were married at St. Mildred's church, "with the consent of William Godwin, her Father."

The Godwins gave them a wedding breakfast before the ceremony, and they returned for dinner and supper from the church. There was no flinging of old shoes or scattering of rice as the bridal pair departed; and Clare, who was at Bath with little William, was informed by Shelley that he would fetch Mary there at once.

Shelley, who was eager to get possession of Harriet's chil-



WILLIAM GODWIN

FROM THE PAINTING BY JAMES NORTHOLT, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

dren, was obliged within a week after his return to Bath with Mary to go up again to London on the business of carrying out this purpose. During his absence Clare's little girl, Allegra, Byron's daughter, was born on the 13th day of January. "Four days of idleness" is the only allusion to the event in Mary Shelley's "Diary." Shelley wrote a long letter to Byron, telling him of the baby's birth and presuming the father's pleasure in the announcement. They called the child at first Alba, or "the Dawn," after the nickname which Mary had for Byron, Albé, on account of his beauty and the whiteness of his skin.

When Shelley applied to John Westbrook for the custody of the children the demand was refused, and Westbrook instituted legal proceedings to make them wards of chancery. Romilly was retained for Westbrook and Basil Montagu, friend of Godwin, for Shelley. A copy of *Queen Mab* was one of the exhibits filed with Westbrook's bill. Lord Chancellor Eldon decided the case against Shelley, and stated in his opinion that there was nothing in the evidence to warrant him in thinking that Shelley, before he arrived at the age of twenty-five years, had changed the opinions that he avowed at eighteen, and that there seemed to be ample proof that no such change had taken place.

He lost his case, as Byron lost his caste in England, because he dared to have and to express ideas that did not conform to the existent hard-and-fast rules of English religious and social and political opinion.

After bandying the children about among various custodians the Court finally gave Ianthe to Westbrook and his daughter, Eliza, and Charles to his grandfather, Sir Timothy

Shelley. Ianthe grew up and became the wife of Mr. Esdaile, and was living in June, 1876. The little boy, who came to be the darling of Sir Timothy's heart, died fifty years before his sister, at the age of eleven.

From Bath, where Clare was staying under the name of "Mrs. Clairmont," and where Alba was reputed to be the daughter of a friend of hers in London, she and the Shelleys went with the children to dwell at Marlow. They remained there for a time, until Alba's presence excited the curiosity of neighbors and friends, and gave rise to gossip and embarrassing questions. Whose was this child? And if she was Clare's, as appearances indicated and the tongue of scandal was not slow to suggest, who was her father? The situation was extremely annoying to the Shelleys; for Shelley's unconventionality and unorthodox opinions were well known, and the stigma of the chancery decree emphasized his bad reputation and lent an appearance of probability to the dark rumors about himself and the handsome unmarried girl in his household. He wrote to Byron, then leading a life of wild dissipation—the most reckless of his career—at Venice, laying before him the awkwardness of the condition in which he and Mary were placed, and the difficulty that they had in shielding Clare from the talk of friends and neighbors and even of their own servants. But Clare, with reckless indifference to public opinion, made little effort to conceal her motherhood and openly nursed the child herself.

Men of sensitive feelings and selfish dispositions are often prone to put unpleasant things from them by methods in which, in their higher moments, they would be reluctant to indulge; and it is probable that Byron's dissipated and licen-

tious conduct at this time, which had come to be the scandal of Venice, had some of its roots in his discomfort over his affair with Clare and its result in the birth of her baby. Shelley urged him in his letters to do something to relieve the embarrassment and annoyance that beset the household at Marlow, and suggested that if no permanent solution could be reached a temporary arrangement should be made for placing Alba elsewhere. Clare's condition was distressing; and while the Shelleys were more than willing to do everything in their power for her, they knew better than most people that she was penniless and discarded by her mother, and that her future capacity to earn an honest living depended on her ability to keep up appearances and to preserve a decent character in the eyes of the world. They thought that the child's father should come to her relief.

Byron finally signified his willingness to receive his daughter and to provide for her; but coupled the offer with stringent conditions, the most objectionable of which to Clare was that the child should be finally and completely separated from its mother. This brought matters to an *impasse*; and Shelley, whose health was failing in the dampness of the house at Marlow, which was soaking the wall paper, his lungs and his books with moisture, and where Mary was beseeching him to go to Italy on that account, wrote to Byron of his purpose to spend the winter at Pisa. With the hope that in a personal interview he might induce Alba's father to modify some of his harsh conditions, he intimated that in the event of his carrying out this intention he would fetch the child with him.

Byron evinced an interest in the little girl, whom her



mother now called Allegra; but none whatever in Clare herself. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned"; and Clare's girlish love for her daughter's father had changed into gall and wormwood. Many years later, in 1870, Trelawny, who had proved himself the unselfish and devoted friend of both her and Mary after Shelley's drowning, wrote to Clare: "You have so long nourished your hatred of Byron, that you cannot judge him fairly"; and in another letter, in which he compares Shelley and Byron, to the latter's disadvantage, he again makes protest against her relentless enmity to her recreant lover, then long since dead, whom she continued to hate with a hatred stronger than death.

On March 9th, 1818, Mary, whose little daughter had been born the preceding autumn, wrote in her "Diary": "Christening the children." The church register of St. Giles in the Fields, London, shows the baptism on that day of "William and Clara Everina, children of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Esq., and Mary Wollstonecraft, his wife, of Great Marlow, Co. Bucks, (late of Great Russell Street)," and recites that the first named was born January 24, 1816, and the second, September 21, 1817. It also contains the record of the baptism at the same time of "Clara Allegra, reputed daughter of Rt. Hon. George Gordon, Lord Byron, Peer, of no fixed residence, traveling on the Continent, by Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, born January 17, 1817."

Clare, also of no fixed residence or abiding place, had linked in her daughter's name her own with her happy memories of Mont Alegre, near Byron's villa at Geneva.

On the eve of Shelley's departure from England with Mary, Clare, and the children, Mary Lamb came to their

lodgings, and Peacock took supper there. Godwin and the Hunts were probably of the party. Before the evening ended, Shelley fell into one of his profound slumbers; and Hunt next saw him in Italy where his doom was impending over him.

It may be surmised that the laudanum vial was in his pocket, and the tragedy of existence in his beguiled brain.

## XVI

### LA CONTESSA

AT the age of nineteen, Mary Shelley had begun in the cottage at Geneva her famous novel *Frankenstein*, while Byron at the Villa Diodati spurred her on with the reading of German ghost stories when the inmates of the two establishments gathered there; and there he had himself written *The Vampire*. "You and I will publish ours together," he had said to her, when it was suggested that they should each write a supernatural tale of fantasy. Clare and Shelley each began the composition of a story of horror neither of which was ever completed. Mary afterwards corrected the proof-sheets of *Frankenstein* at Marlow, while Shelley was writing *The Revolt of Islam*.

When Shelley left Geneva on his return to England, Byron gave him the manuscript of the Third Canto of *Childe Harold* to be delivered to Murray. The publisher was enthusiastic, and wrote to the author the day after its delivery: "I was thrilled with delight yesterday by the announcement of Mr. Shelley with the MS of *Childe Harold*!" Murray took it at once to Gifford, upon whom it had an extraordinary effect. He said in a letter to Byron that Gifford, who was his "reader," had been exceedingly ill with jaundice and unable to write or do anything, but that he could not leave off the perusal of the poem, and that he had sat up until he had

finished every line of it. It had actually agitated him into a fever, and he "was much worse" when Murray called.

The star of the poet's fame was now blazing with an effulgent luster in the literary firmament. Everybody who was anybody wanted to go on with the *Pilgrimage* of the hero, in whose story England thought it read the autobiography of the author. At a dinner to the assembled booksellers of London, Murray sold seven thousand copies of the Third Canto and seven thousand of the *The Prisoner of Chillon* in an evening. Scott reviewed the *Pilgrimage* in the *Edinburgh Quarterly*, and wrote to the publisher that in genius poetry had seldom had Byron's equal, and that if he had acted wrong in some respects he had been no worse than half the men of his rank in London who had done the same things, and were not spoken of because they were not worth being railed against. Lady Byron, who wept when she heard of Byron's death at Missolonghi, wished to learn who was the author of the *Quarterly's* review; and the impetuous Lady Caroline Lamb begged Murray to send her the poem "before any one has it."

Byron's sojourn at Geneva had had in it little that was personally agreeable beyond his associations with the Shelleys and with Clare. His disinclination to meet the English who infested the place renewed itself towards his countrymen at Venice; and with few exceptions he avoided the hundreds of curious and inquisitive visitors who sought him out with pestiferous importunity.

Nor did he long remain under the ancient spell of the city's romance and legend, where she "sat in state, throned on her hundred isles." He wrote while there his *Ode to*

Venice; but the cankerworm of discontent was gnawing at his heart and the pains of his suicidal diet were in his system. The faded glories of Venetian story suggested unpleasant analogies; and the place itself seemed to him one of vanishing vitality.

"To see a city die daily," he said, "is a sad contemplation. I sought to distract my mind from a sense of her desolation and my own solitude by plunging into a vortex that was anything but pleasure. When one gets into a mill-stream, it is difficult to swim against it and keep out of the wheels."

Here after an orgy of sordid relations with low women, and an unaccustomed surrender to eating and drinking that brought on him an exacerbation of his digestive troubles and the obesity against which he had so long and bravely struggled, at a social function, towards the close of 1819, he met Teresa Gamba, the Countess Guiccioli.

He shut down on his worst indulgences, starved himself, recovered by degrees his normal weight and form, and gave up his indiscriminate immoralities. This abstention and self-subjugation were slow and gradual; but he considered the game worth the candle, and to La Contessa was largely due the credit.

At the age of sixteen, Teresa, daughter of the Italian Count Gamba, had been given by her father in marriage to one of the wealthiest noblemen of Romagna, then far advanced in years. "Young Italian women," Byron said in writing of the episode, "are not satisfied with good old men"; and it was no unusual thing for a charming young married lady to have what was known as a *cavalier serviente*. The venerable Count Guiccioli was apparently complaisant to his wife's association



THE COUNTESS GUICCOLI  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY H. MEYER AFTER THE DRAWING BY SANTO PISARIO

with young Italian gentlemen of his own rank, position, and religion; and at first he went so far as to regard with tolerance the attentions of the famous English nobleman to his Countess.

"For some time," says Byron, "he winked at our intimacy; but at length made an exception against me as a foreigner, a heretic, and Englishman, and what was worse than all, a liberal."

As had been the case with the English *haut monde* the Count was less concerned with Byron's reputation as a libertine and his attentions to his wife than with his objectionable political opinions.

Teresa was about seventeen years old when Byron met her, but looked even younger. She had a fair complexion and golden yellow hair; and though her figure was rather short and thick-set, her features were handsome and pleasing. She had languishing dark eyes, and there was an amiable gentleness in her voice which was interesting. Leigh Hunt, who disliked her, observes: "I should not say that she was a very intelligent person. Both her wisdom and her want of wisdom were on the side of her feelings, in which there was doubtless mingled a good deal of the self-love natural to her flattered beauty. . . . In a word, Madame Guiccioli was a kind of buxom parlor-boarder, compressing herself artificially into dignity and elegance, and fancying she walked in the eyes of the whole world a heroine by the side of a poet. When I saw her at Monte Nero near Leghorn she was in a state of excitement and exaltation, and had really something of this look."

Her elderly spouse who, like other owners of large estates,

often wanted ready cash, approached his Lady's *caralier serviente* for a loan of £1000. Byron, upon Teresa's return to her husband's house at Ravenna, went there, got her, and took her back to Venice on the plea that she was threatened with consumption and that he desired her to have the best medical attention the city afforded. Moore, who was then in Venice, advised Byron to give the Count the £1000 which he wished to borrow, and to let the lady go. Byron, despite the money he was now receiving from his books, had already begun to cultivate the Scottish thrift of which he often boasted, and replied that he would "save the money and keep the lady too." This he did.

The old Count finally objected to the continuance of the English heretic's attention to his wife, and went to Venice for her. Byron told him to take her, and advised her to return home with him. She went, and he determined to go to England. Instead, he followed Teresa to Ravenna. The Count, still hoping for a loan, invited him to his palace and he accepted the invitation. The love-making went on under the elderly gentleman's nose. He wished it to stop.

"He insisted," says Byron. "Her family took her part. Catholics cannot get divorces; but to the scandal of all Ravenna that matter was at last referred to the Pope, who ordered a separate maintenance on condition that she should reside under her father's roof. All this was not agreeable, and at length I was forced to smuggle her out of Ravenna, having discovered a plot laid with the sanction of the legate for shutting her up in a convent for life."

Teresa's father and brother Pietro regarded her association with the English nobleman with an acquiescence that de-



veloped into cordial approval; and Pietro Gamba became his devoted admirer and friend. Going with him on his last journey to Greece, he was present at his death-bed and followed his corpse to England.

Byron, who was deeply in love with Teresa after his peculiar fashion, has left a record of her intellectual qualities as he conceived them. Her conversation, he says, was "lively without being frivolous; without being learned, she has read all the best authors of her own and the French language. She often conceals what she knows from the fear of being thought to know too much; possibly because she knows I am not fond of blues. To use an expression of Jeffrey's, 'If she has blue stockings, she contrives that her petticoats shall hide them.'"

Their affection for each other was for a time passionate and genuine, but continued association outlived it. Before he went to Greece she had palled on his fugitive fancy, and his attachment had faded away. He did not reach an open rupture with her, and though she never felt towards him such intense enmity as did Clare Clairmont, she grew at last to dislike him, though she sought to conceal the feeling. In the end she acknowledged that she "feared him more than she hated him."

During the two or more years that he spent at Venice his pen continued incessantly busy, even in the midst of his dissipated and scandalous indulgences. He produced at this time the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold* and the first and second Cantos of *Don Juan*, the *Ode to Venice* and *Mazeppa*; and he took occasion to express his opinions, in vivacious letters home, of some of his literary contemporaries in England.

"You may make what I say here as public as you please,"

he wrote to Murray, "more particularly to Southey, whom I look upon—and will say so publicly—to be a dirty, lying rascal, and will prove it in ink—or in his blood, if I did not believe him to be too much of a poet to risk it! If he has forty reviews at his back, as he has the *Quarterly*, I would have at him in his scribbling capacity now that he has begun with me; but I will do nothing underhand; tell him what I say, from me, and every one else you please. . . . I understand Coleridge's abusing me—but how or why Southey, whom I had never obliged in any sort of way, should go about fibbing and calumniating is more than I readily comprehend. . . . I have read his review of Hunt, where he has attacked Shelley in an oblique and shabby manner. Does he know what that review has done? I will tell you; it has sold an edition of *The Revolt of Islam*, which otherwise nobody would have thought of reading, and few who read can understand—I, for one."

This looks like a bad attack of dyspeptic neurasthenia, superimposed upon the old Gight truculence.

His powers of satire and mocking humor and invective are illustrated in his letters and journals, which are written with the abandon that expresses the feelings of the moment and gives its greatest charm to epistolary correspondence. His letters are as fresh and vivid today as when they were written, and are the unrestrained outpourings of his impetuous and reckless nature. Their contents are often contradictory and often untrue; but they are none the less delightful.

He was living at Venice when Shelley and Mary, their two children and Clare Clairmont and Allegra, accompanied by Elise, the Swiss servant, set out from London for the Con-

tinient on what proved to be Shelley's last journey. When they got to Lyons, he wrote to Byron, telling him that Allegra was thus far on her way to him; and again he wrote him from Milan, asking him to come and take the child. Byron had said that he was only willing to receive his daughter on the condition that her surrender by her mother should be absolute, and their separation permanent. Clare had finally, with an aching heart, brought herself to agree to this. But Shelley had now heard the gossip that was floating around concerning Byron's dissolute life at Venice,—how he had had a scandalous affair with Marianna Segati, the dashing and gorgeously beautiful spouse of a Venetian linen-draper, to whom he made presents of diamonds and jewelry, which she sold and which he recklessly bought back for her a few weeks later; and how he had purchased a baker's wife from her husband for five hundred crowns; to say nothing of the numerous other impossible people, men and women, who took part in orgies and carousals at his palace. Many of the stories were exaggerated, but there was enough smoke to indicate the existence of considerable fire.

A short time after Shelley's letter from Milan, Elise Foggi, the Swiss servant, was sent with the child to Allegra's father, and remained to take care of her. Elise, who had been with the Shelleys since their stay at Geneva, wrote frequent communications about Allegra to Clare, who, hoping that Shelley might be able by personal approach to induce Byron to relax his hostile attitude, persuaded him to take her with him to Venice. Fearing trouble if he should learn of her visit, Clare bade Shelley not to let him know of her presence; and on the morning after her arrival she went to the house of Mr. Hopp-

ner, the English consul-general, who was Byron's intimate friend, and was welcomed by the Hoppners, who kept her coming concealed from him.

Shelley, leaving Clare with the Hoppners, where she remained a very little while, called on Byron who gave him a kindly and friendly greeting. It was the first time they had met since they had dwelt as next-door neighbors at Geneva; and in the flush of his pleasure at the meeting, Byron, who had got it into his head that Clare was at Padua, agreed that Allegra might spend a week with her mother in that city.

Shelley accompanied him in his gondola to the Lido where horses were awaiting them, and they rode together along the sands bordering the historic sea where the old Doges had been accustomed to "wed the Adriatic."

He wrote to Mary from Venice:

"Our conversations consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me."

This horseback ride was memorable, for Shelley told in *Julian and Maddalo* of how he

"Rode one evening with Count Maddalo  
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow  
Of Ardia towards Venice."

Byron, with the impulsive generosity which often characterized his associations with those he liked, offered Shelley the use of his country villa at I Cappucini near Este, which he accepted; and here Shelley began his *Prometheus*, and wrote *Julian and Maddalo*.

Mary later set out for I Cappucini with her children; but

on arriving there her little daughter, Clara, became dangerously ill, and Shelley took the child to Venice for medical aid, where she died soon after reaching the city. She was buried on the Lido, near the spot that enshrined Allegra's name in Shelley's verse.

Byron, wearied of Venice with its ruined palaces and bridges and silent sluggish canals, and drawn by his passion for the golden-haired Teresa, went to Ravenna where Count Guiccioli lived with his lovelorn young wife.

No other place, except Greece, so charmed Byron. He thought the neighboring peasantry the best people in the world, and with an ever eager eye for feminine beauty considered the women the loveliest he had anywhere seen.

"Those at Tivoli and Frascati," he said, "are mere Sabines, coarse creatures compared to the Romagnese. You may talk of your English women; and it is true that out of one hundred Italian and English you will find thirty of the latter handsome; but there will be one Italian on the other side of the scale who will more than balance the deficit in numbers—one, who like the Florence Venus, has no rival, and can have none in the North. I found also at Ravenna much education and liberality of thinking among the higher classes. The climate is delightful. I was not broken in upon by society. Ravenna lies out of the way of travellers. I was never tired of my rides in the pine forests; it breathes of the Decameron; it is poetical ground. Francesca lived and Dante was exiled and died at Ravenna. There is something inspiring in such an air."

Politics were at fever heat, and those who were liberal in their views were under the ban of the party in power. It

was the time of the Carbonari movement against the dominating Austrians. "The proscription was immense in Romagna," he wrote, "and embraced many of the first nobles; almost all my friends, among the rest the Gambas (the father and brother of the Countess Guiccioli), who took no part in the affair, but were included in it. They were exiled and their possessions confiscated."

He had a hundred stands of arms in his house in preparation for the outbreak. He received several anonymous communications warning him against the horseback rides he was accustomed to take. It was his habit never to stir without being well-armed, and his pistols when he slept were always in reach at his bedside.

"They knew that I never missed my aim," he said boastfully; "perhaps this saved me."

He plumed himself on his skill as a pistol shot, which Trelawny says was after all nothing to brag of.

The Austrian commandant of the city was assassinated on the street opposite his residence. Byron thought that the police were implicated, and that the place of the murder had been especially selected with a view of incriminating him. As he came out of his house and was about to mount his horse, he heard the assassin's shot and saw a man stretched on the pavement and another running away. He directed his servant to lift the bleeding body into his palace, and assisted him in the act. The murdered man's adjutant followed the corpse into the house. "I remember," he said, "his lamentation over him: 'Poor devil! he would not have harmed a dog!'"

Byron possessed unflinching personal courage and a stoic

will that never permitted him to complain of his grievous bodily ailments. No danger ever daunted him; and, as he told Mr. Rodgers, when a lad at Nottingham, no physical suffering could drag from him a lamentation of pain.

In spite of his devoted attention to Teresa and his interest in local politics, he did an astonishing amount of literary work at Ravenna. His energy and industry were ceaseless and inexhaustible, and his nights were given to writing. Here he composed *The Prophecy of Dante*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, the fifth Canto of *Don Juan*, *The Vision of Judgment*, *The Blues* and *The Irish Avatar*, between December, 1819, and the end of October, 1821.

## XVII

### ITALIAN YEARS

**H**IS villa, near Este, which the Shelleys were now occupying, was a cheerful and vine-trellised dwelling with a garden and a summer pavilion. A pergola stretched from the hall-door to the summer house, and here was Shelley's study.

"We looked from the garden," says Mary, "over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded in the west by the fair Appennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in the misty distance."

The villa had been built on the site of a Capuchin convent that was demolished when the French suppressed religious houses; and on the hill near by stood the ancient and ruined castle of Este.

To this romantic spot Shelley had preceded his wife, who came from Milan in the autumn to join him; and Clare stayed at the villa with them.

They spent the following winter in Naples, whither Clare accompanied them; and in the spring of 1819 they went to Rome for a visit. Here, having recovered from the depression which her separation from Allegra had caused her, Clare with renewed spirit and industry went to work to equip herself for making a living. Her opportunities were favorable, and under the instruction of a good master she took singing



lessons, and devoted herself assiduously to her music for which she had a natural gift.

In Rome, under the lead of Mary, who was very fond of society, she enjoyed a less secluded life than they had been compelled to undergo since they quitted Marlow. At the house of Signora Dioniga, a Roman painter and authoress, whom Mary describes with the feline touch which not infrequently is perceptible in the phrases of her "Diary," as "very old, very miserly and very mean," the two young women saw something of Italian social life.

They stayed too long in Rome. The fever of the Campagna attacked the surviving child, William, as they were making arrangements to go to Leghorn to reside. Clare nursed the little boy through his sickness with unselfish devotion, but every effort to save his life was unavailing.

They buried him in the English Cemetery at Rome,—a spot in which now sleeps Shelley himself, with Keats and Landor and Trelawny for company. Shelley describes the place in his introduction to "Adonais," written about two years after his little lad came to lie there, as "the romantic and lonely cemetery . . . under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

Three days after little William died, Shelley and Mary and Clare, in restlessness and sorrow, left Rome for Leghorn. Weighted down with care and sad experience, they were again alone together. Life seemed to them very different from

what it had been, when five years before they had traveled through France with their donkey, carrying hearts as light as their purses. They were still as incapable of coping with life as before; but they were yet young; and hope, which is the companion of youth, had not left them. Clare had a larger social wisdom than either of the other two. Shelley was no less the impracticable dreamer for his consciousness of half realized mistakes; Mary was as visionary and equally ignorant of life; while Clare, still full of vitality and enthusiasm, with the consciousness of a great error that had brought her bitter grief and the anguish of an immortal tragedy, inspired them with courage and gave them of the best of her unselfishness. She was the mainstay at this time of the other two sorrow-stricken young people, each of whom was, like herself, still little more than a child in years or in a knowledge of the meaning of existence.

At Leghorn another son was born to Mary, Percy Florence Shelley, who succeeded his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, in 1844, as the third baronet.

"Poor Mary," Shelley wrote to Hunt after the coming of this child, "begins for the first time to look a little consoled; for we have spent, as you imagine, a miserable five months."

Sir Percy Shelley lived into his seventieth year, dying at Bournemouth in December, 1889. His friend, Robert Louis Stevenson, from Waikiki in the South Seas, had dedicated in the spring of the same year *The Master of Ballantrae* to "Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley, sea-farers and sea-lovers," like himself.

Shelley's father, who disapproved alike of his son's wandering life, his apparent aimlessness, his poetry and most

of all his political and religious principles, and who entertained a similar opinion, though with less personal feeling, of Lord Byron, wrote to his solicitor, who continued to aid him in keeping a jealous eye on Shelley, that he had heard at Bath of some ladies traveling in Italy who had met "P. B. S. at Florence, with an addition to his family of a son," and that Lord Byron was with him there. Sir Timothy, the incarnation of English smug aristocratic respectability, expressed the grim guess that "P. B. S." was unlikely to visit England soon, "with so many unwelcome guests to ask how he does by a gentle tap."

The "unwelcome guests" were Shelley's creditors, who were annoying the baronet about his son's debts. The sneer was a covert expression of the elder gentleman's general reprobation of the scapegrace, that was accentuated by the fierce fit of gout for which he was at the moment taking the cure at the health resort.

He was mistaken about Byron's being at Florence. Shelley, knowing his love of music, wished him to hear one of these English women sing, and wrote to his friend asking him to come. But his Lordship, reflecting that Clare was there, had no disposition to meet her and was "prevented by illness" from accepting the invitation.

He no longer associated her with the time, when under the spell of her voice, he had written for her, in March, 1816, the lines:

"There be none of Beauty's daughters  
With a magic like thee;  
And like music on the waters  
Is thy sweet voice to me:

When, as if its sound was causing  
The charmed ocean's pausing,  
The waves lie still and gleaming,  
And the lulled winds seem dreaming;  
And the midnight moon is weaving  
Her bright chain o'er the deep;  
Whose breast is gently heaving  
As an infant's, asleep:  
So the spirit bows before thee,  
To listen and adore thee,  
With a soft but full emotion,  
Like the swell of summer's ocean."

Clare, who in her childhood had listened with receptive mind and keen perception to Godwin's social and political views, and who, from her long and intimate association with Shelley, whom she admired for his genius and his intellectuality and loved for his unfailing generosity and kindness, was in thorough sympathy and understanding with those impulses and opinions that he flaunted in the face of outraged English society, and gave to them all an unquestioning adherence. It is due to this attitude towards him, and to Mary Shelley's "Diary" and letters in which she is "praised with faint damns," that much of the obloquy visited on her by both Shelley's and Byron's biographers, who have spoken of her as "heartless," and as "a wanton," may be attributed.

She was neither.

Pisa was the wandering Shelley's next abiding place. Before leaving Florence, Percy was baptized by a minister of the English Church and a copy of his baptismal certificate, with British precaution, was taken by Peacock to England for recordation in the register of the Church of St. James's, Westminster. In the January preceding his accession to the

baronetcy, he says in a letter, mentioning his christening, "Miss Clairmont was present at my baptism."

At Pisa Shelley and Mary spent two tranquil years, that were only marred for her by his acquaintance with Emilia Viviani, a lovely Italian girl, who had been locked up by her father in a convent until a husband of proper rank and station could be found to take her without a dowry. His enthusiastic admiration for Emilia found expression in poetry that he composed in her praise, which the jealous Mary resented. Shelley wrote to Clare in Florence, where she had now obtained a position as governess in an Italian family, expressing the greatest admiration for Emilia, whom he had generously informed when she spoke of Mary's "coldness" to her, that it was "only the ash that covered an affectionate heart."

Clare paid a visit to the Shelleys in December, but went back to Florence before Christmas. Mary's aversion to her had continued to increase, and the claws showed at times under the soft fur. Shelley had a sincere affection for Clare and a great compassion for her. Her brightness and vivacity cheered him and her humor amused him. He said that he liked her, although she often teased and irritated him, and he missed her teasing when she was absent. She had no close friends except the Shelleys; and her dependent condition and her continued anxiety for Allegra excited his gentle sympathy.

Whatever Mary may have felt about her constant presence, he had no desire for her to be away from them. But her consciousness that she was a financial burden made her restless and glad to get the situation which she had now obtained.

Her absence even reconciled Mary in a measure to Shelley's attentions to Miss Viviani. She was pleased that her charming stepsister was at last out of the house.

When they had come back to London from the Continent after Mary's elopement, Godwin, who was greatly disturbed by the situation, and whose wife was anxious to get possession of her daughter, upon discovering the girl's purpose to continue with the Shelleys rather than return to a home that was unbearable on account of her mother's bad temper, proposed that Clare should become a governess. But she had no inclination to abandon the only friends who had ever shown her unselfish affection, and she was conscious of her lack of qualification for a position that would be at best little more than that of a menial. She knew that the lot of the ordinary governess in an English family was then a hard and dreary one; and she was full of youth and spirit and enthusiasm. It was very agreeable to her to be with the Shelleys, to each of whom she was attached, and she was more than willing to do anything she could to help them.

She refused to acquiesce in Godwin's proposition. Upon her declination of his scheme, he offered to find some other family than his own where she might be taken in as a visitor. She was willing to agree to this only on the proud conditions "that she should in all situations openly proclaim and earnestly support a total contempt for the laws and institutions of society, and that no restraint should be imposed upon her correspondence and intercourse with those from whom she was separated." These terms the Godwins refused, and she continued a member of the Shelley household. She never ceased to adore Shelley, and her unconcealed admiration and

affection gave Mary many uneasy moments; but there is in all the story of her life and his nothing to prove that her relations with him were ever anything but innocent.

The Shelleys had been living at Pisa some eighteen months when Byron, who exhibited too active an interest in politics to suit the government at Ravenna, was given to understand that his presence there was no longer permissible. He therefore went with Teresa and her father and brother, who were also regarded as undesirable citizens, to the Tuscan City of the Leaning Tower.

Here he leased for a year the ancient and gloomy palace of the Lanfranchi, said to have been designed by Michelangelo, whose earlier occupants had bequeathed to the neighborhood an extraordinary number of legendary ghosts and supernatural visitants. The ancient apparitions lost their interest in that excited by the new people who came to dwell in it.

The palace was too big even for Byron's horde of servants, retainers, furniture, books, and menagerie of animals; and he occupied only the first floor. His time at Pisa was spent in reading, writing, horseback riding and pistol-practice, varied with frequent visits to the dwelling of the Gambas, where the Countess Guiccioli was established with her father and brother.

Before his arrival at Pisa Shelley had written a letter to Leigh Hunt in England, stating that he had been on a visit to Ravenna, and that it was in consequence of this visit that Byron had determined to come and live at Pisa.

"I have taken the finest palace on the Lung' Arno for him," his letter to Hunt continued, "but the material part of my visit

consists in a message which he desires me to give you and which I think ought to add to your determination—for such a one I hope you have formed—of restoring your shattered health and spirits by a migration to these ‘regions mild, of calm and serene air.’ ”

Byron’s message to Hunt was to ask him to come to Italy and edit *The Liberal*, a publication to be devoted purely to literature and to which he proposed becoming the chief contributor. Shelley entertained a very sincere affection for Hunt, who had been conducting *The Examiner* in London, and had drawn upon himself the enmity of the Tories by its politics. Being poverty stricken and libelous, he had been lodged in jail,—a frequent abode for the reckless and impecunious of the time. Shelley addressed him in this letter as “my dearest friend,” and imagined that in furthering Byron’s project he would not only aid Hunt to recover his shattered health, but would give him an opportunity of escaping from his financial misfortunes. But Shelley himself was in his usual condition of pecuniary distress; and knowing that Hunt was lacking means to pay the traveling expenses of his family to Italy, he was seriously concerned about obtaining the money to get them over.

“I did not ask Lord Byron to assist me in sending a remittance for your journey,” he wrote, “because there are men, however excellent, from whom we would never receive an obligation in the worldly sense of the word; and I am as jealous for my friend as for myself. I, as you know, have it not; but I suppose that at last I shall make up an impudent face, and ask Horace Smith to add to the many obligations he has conferred on me. I know I need only ask.”



Hunt came with his wife and children, himself in a state of hypochondria and penniless. Byron, who had known him in England as a friend of Moore's, was at Monte Nero, a country house in the vicinity of Leghorn when Hunt arrived in that city. The Countess Guiccioli, with her father, was also at Monte Nero. Byron had got into a row with the police at Pisa, as a result of which he and his friends, the Gambas, had withdrawn to Leghorn, twelve miles away, on the Mediterranean. Shelley had overcome his reluctance to approach Byron for Hunt's expenses, and had borrowed from him two hundred pounds. This money Byron sent to Shelley, who gave him his bond for the amount.

Byron, who afterwards boasted to Lady Blessington of his avarice and parsimony, undoubtedly expected to make money from *The Liberal*; but after its failure he persuaded himself that he had gone into the enterprise solely for the sake of helping Hunt.

The "suicidal diet," which he had renewed after meeting Teresa at Venice, appears to have been abandoned at the time of the arrival of Hunt, who gives a graphic picture of the poet when they met. He says that Byron had grown so fat that he hardly knew him. He was dressed in a loose nankeen jacket and white trousers, with his neck cloth open and his hair in thin ringlets about his throat. Altogether, he represented a very different aspect from the compact, energetic, curly-headed person whom he had known in England. Byron took him into an inner room and presented him to the Countess, who at that moment was in a state of great agitation on account of her brother Pietro having just been stabbed while interposing in a quarrel among the servants of the house.

He established Hunt and his family in the Lanfranchi palace, and went back to Teresa at Monte Nero. He was accused of treating Mrs. Hunt with disdain. He never liked her, even during the time he was on good terms with her husband. She liked him as little.

“What do you think, Mrs. Hunt?” he one day asked her. “Trelawny has been speaking against my morals! What do you think of that?”

“It is the first time,” she replied, “that I ever heard of them.”

## XVIII

### THE WOMAN SCORNE

**A**LLEGRA, who was a year and a half old when she went to her father at Venice, was a sprightly and engaging child. She had blue eyes and her mother's wavy hair and gypsy complexion. Her coming awakened in him, in the midst of his sensuous and reckless life, something of his better nature. Shelley declared that she was lovely; and her father seemed to think her so, although his friends, the Hoppners, considered her spoiled and disagreeable.

Soon after her arrival, the Hoppners, knowing that Byron's household consisted only of his men-servants, offered to take charge of Allegra; and she and her nurse, Elise, went to stay with them. Her father had written to his sister, Mrs. Leigh, about her: "Very pretty, remarkably intelligent . . . but what is remarkable, much more like Lady Byron than her mother—so much so as to stupefy the learned Fletcher and astonish me. She has very blue eyes and that singular forehead, fair curly hair and a devil of a spirit—but that is Papa's."

The influence of the Countess Guiccioli moved him to deal with Allegra in a manner that caused Clare terrible distress and disappointment. The little girl's presence in Venice, and Byron's sense of responsibility for her, caused him to feel,

despite the amusement she afforded him, that she was in the way. His relations with Teresa, and his desire to be unrestrained in his association with the golden-haired Countess, made him anxious to place Allegra under some safe guardianship that would leave him entirely free.

Before she was born, her anticipated coming had given him discomfort; and he had then urged on Clare that her expected offspring should be sent to his sister, Mrs. Leigh, to be brought up with her children. In addition to his wish to be relieved of her rearing, he had been influenced in making this proposition to give her to his sister by the more laudable desire of securing the infant's nurture and of freeing Clare from the embarrassment and discredit that must naturally accompany her as an unmarried mother. Clare made such strenuous objection to the scheme that he abandoned it without ever consulting Mrs. Leigh on the subject.

When he followed the Countess Guiccioli to Ravenna he was considering a proposal that had been made by Mrs. Vavassour, an English lady who was a friend of the Hoppners, to adopt Allegra. But the offer was not unlike that which he had himself made to Clare about the child. Mrs. Vavassour would only take her on the condition that her father should agree to surrender her entirely, and should not be consulted in any respect about her rearing or her education.

When he arrived in Ravenna these negotiations were still in progress between Mrs. Vavassour and the Hoppners. Mrs. Hoppner, feeling the weight of her responsibility, wished to be relieved of looking after Allegra. She did not like her and, on the plea of a contemplated visit to Switzerland with her husband, expressed the wish that some other disposition

should be made of her. Byron wrote to Hoppner from Ravenna: "The best way will be to leave Allegra with Antonio's spouse till I can decide something about her myself; but I thought that you would have had an answer from Mrs. Vavassour. You have had bore enough with me and mine already."

The negotiations with Mrs. Vavassour fell through. Byron had been as disinclined to accede to her conditions of adopting Allegra as Clare had been unwilling to consent to his taking entire possession of her. He directed that the little girl and her nurse, Elise, should join him at Bologna, whither he had gone from Ravenna. He wrote to Murray: "I have sent for my daughter from Venice."

He had objected, even for his own convenience, to make a complete renunciation of his daughter, because he was entertaining at this time the idea that Teresa, of whom he was deeply enamored, might some day become his wife. The child's presence in his better moments afforded him diversion and pleasure. He was extremely fond of her, and delighted in having her with him and in observing her baby sports, when her presence did not hinder his association with the Countess.

He wished to see his lady-love and Allegra together, that he might ascertain from her treatment of the child whether he would discover in Teresa such a stepmother as he could wish.

When the little girl and her nurse went to him at Bologna, his infatuation for the Countess was at its flood-tide; and Count Guiccioli had not begun to be unpleasant. The elderly husband surprised her *cavalier serviente* by his conduct towards him.

Byron wrote to Hoppner: "*She* manages very well; but if I come away with a stiletto in my gizzard some fine morning, I shall not be astonished. I can't make *him* out at all; he visits me frequently, and takes me out (like Whittington, the lord mayor) in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to me, that he is completely governed by her,—for that matter, so am I. The people here don't know what to make of us, as he had the character of jealousy with all his wives—this is the third."

It was believed that the Count had caused two of the lovers of two of these earlier wives to be assassinated.

Byron liked being taken out in the Whittington coach. "In talking of Ravenna, the natal residence of La Contessa Guiccioli," says Lady Blessington, "he dwells with peculiar complacency on the equipage of her husband; talks of the six black carriage-horses, without which the old Count seldom moved, and their spacious palazzo; also the wealth of the Conte, and the distinguished connections of the lady."

He had a great respect for wealth and ceremonial display.

The day after his letter to Murray stating that he had sent for Allegra, he wrote in Teresa's copy of *Corinne*: "My destiny rests with you, and you are a woman seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent."

The Countess became ill; and, her lover having carried her off to Venice for medical advice, upon the plea that she was threatened with consumption, she was sent from there by her physician to La Mira.

"Lord Byron," she wrote to Moore in later years, "having a villa at La Mira, gave it up to me, and came to reside there with me."

Allegra's visit to her father at Bologna resulted in a disposition of her that he had not contemplated when he caused her to be brought there. The cloister-bred, Catholic Teresa, to whom he had told the child's story, and who was familiar with his love affair with Clare, urged him to place Allegra in a convent. Her advice was specious and plausible. Such an arrangement would meet his convenience, to say nothing of her own. He would be relieved of anxiety and responsibility for his daughter's welfare. He might visit her when he wished, or have her visit him. He would make no permanent surrender of her, and could thereafter exercise such control or arrange for such future disposition of her as he might desire. The nuns were kind and holy women. Allegra would be reared and educated in an atmosphere of piety, and cared for with a tenderness that she was little likely to experience if left to drift from pillar to post in the uncertainty of his own wanderings. Moreover, was not Teresa herself a lovely example of the rearing and education that might be had for her under such auspices?

He was easily persuaded; and, regarding her advice as evidence of his lady-love's intelligence and wisdom, he sent Allegra to be in charge of the nuns at the convent of Bagna-Cavallo, near Ravenna.

He informed Hoppner that, as she was then four years old, he had no resource save to place her there temporarily. He said that he had never intended to give her an English education, as being a natural child, it would make "her after-settlement doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of £5,000 or £6,000 she might and may marry very respectably." Besides, he desired her to

be a Roman Catholic, which he looked upon "as the best religion."

The arrangement aroused in Clare, who was then about twenty-three years old, a violent feeling of exasperation and an intensified dislike of Byron. She was too sensitive and too devoted in her affection for her little daughter not to find all her maternal instincts outraged by this conduct to the child. He had promised her that Allegra should always remain under his own personal care, or else that of her mother. Clare had no doubt that he had told Teresa that she was an atheist and a scorner of the established conventions of society, and that he had proffered this as an excuse for placing Allegra in the convent, where she would receive a Christian rearing. Her brain was set on fire by the thought that her daughter would be brought up in the Catholic faith, and would regard her mother with an aversion inspired by a heresy that Clare considered even worse than Protestantism. The outraged feeling that she had been treated as the discarded plaything of his faded passion inflamed her with irreconcilable anger.

With the opinions that she entertained about marriage, with which he had apparently found no fault when confronted by them in the associations of Shelley and Mary, she had regarded herself as his wife under a covenant sealed by their mutual affection and made complete by the birth of their baby. She could overlook, if not forgive, his subsequent amours with the various loose mistresses of his Venetian passions,—women who were infinitely her inferiors in the social scale, in education and in intelligence. By none of these had the sacred thing happened of a child being born to him.



They were toys of a day, the passing objects of his unrestrained and natural appetites. She could even condone, though with bitter heart, his latest *tendresse* for the young Italian Countess, who was at least his equal in rank and social position, and of whose heralded beauty and charm she was woefully aware.

But that, after taking her helpless little daughter from her, he should violate his plighted word by making such a disposition of her as meant the destruction of the young mother's every hope for her offspring and herself, was unbearable. It was, in her eyes, the unpardonable sin.

Clare had been less than twenty-one years of age when, with tears and self-reproach, she had sent Allegra to her father at Venice. She had even hoped against hope that he might change his ways when she heard of his escapades there, before Teresa came into his life, with Margarita Cogni, "the Fornarina, with flashing eyes,—the baker's baggage, with bold face and saucy tongue,—the blackguard in petticoats," and with the others.

She let him know by letter how grieved and wronged she felt at his incarceration of her little daughter in the convent. She taunted him with his broken word of honor. She overwhelmed him with accusations of cruelty and meanness. She told him that the licentiousness of Italian women, of which he was not ignorant, came from the rearing they received in Catholic convents. She sought to awaken in him feelings of remorse, by saying how Lady Byron would hear the news of his treatment of Allegra with rejoicings in the security that would result to her and to Ada through his immuring beyond the tattle of the world the innocent offspring

of his passion. She called to his mind the scorn that would fill the souls and stir the tongues of his bitter enemies in England on learning of this crowning outrage.

She went from reproaches to entreaties and prayers. She begged him to give her back the child she had entrusted to him with a belief in his integrity that had been so rudely blasted in order that she might educate her as an English girl should be educated. She told him that if he would do this he would be a gainer both in credit and in purse. She would send Allegra to a good English school, and she should cost him nothing. She said that if he would grant this prayer, his own friends in England might select the school there to which the little girl would go; and she offered to enter into a covenant not to see her oftener than those friends should think proper.

Her condemnation, her cajolement, her beseeching were all in vain. The wizard spell of the enchantress was on him. He remained obdurate, and soothed his conscience with the professed belief that Clare was utterly selfish and had no real affection for Allegra or for any one else but herself. He even went so far as to intimate that she had had another baby since Allegra's birth, which she had consigned to a foundling asylum; and he sneeringly implied that she was then living in concubinage with Shelley under the same roof-tree as her stepsister, Mary.

Byron's feelings towards Shelley had suffered a sea-change. With his habit of nicknames, he now constantly called him "The Snake" when he spoke of him to Trelawny. His use of odd names for his associates, which had caused him to denominate "the Cambridge wrangler" Pippin, had been picked

up by his later companions, and after Shelley had written of him in *Adonais*:

“The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame  
Over his living head like heaven is bent,  
An early but enduring monument,  
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song in sorrow,”

the Cornishman, in speaking of him to others, was accustomed to call him “the Pilgrim.”

## XIX

### ALLEGRA

SHELLEY and his wife were of the opinion at the time that her father's action in placing Allegra in the convent was not unwise. Shelley especially was antagonistic to religious influences of every kind, and outspoken in his expression of aversion to what he regarded as the dogmatic tyranny of all ecclesiastical creeds and establishments; and whatever he thought Mary tacitly approved. But they agreed that the convent was at least a provisional place of shelter for Allegra, where she would be well cared for until in her maturer years other arrangements might be more wisely made for her.

Byron wrote to Shelley: "It is gratifying that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary."

But Shelley, who was extremely attached to the little child whom he had carried in his arms and loved with almost parental tenderness when she was an infant at Marlow, came later, under the influence of the immured Emilia Viviani, to change his views about convents as suitable places for the rearing of young girls. The fascinating Emilia shook his faith in the purity of such schools; and he had also then been to see Allegra at Bagno-Cavallo.

About a year before her death he made a visit to the con-

vent, and described her to his wife in a letter that must have touched and pleased Clare. He told of her curling hair falling in abundance about her neck and the graceful movements of her slim figure as she played with artless gayety around the place. She was "prettily dressed in white muslin and an apron of black silk, with trousers," and was a charming companion as she took his hand and went about with him, showing him her little bed and dining-chair and the small wagon in which she and her playmates drew each other in the grounds and garden. In the three hours he spent in her company she exhibited her childish spirit of mischief by ringing the bell a few minutes before the customary time when it was used to be rung as a signal for the nuns to awaken.

"The tocsin of the convent sounded," he says, "and it required all the efforts of the prioress to prevent the spouses of God to render themselves, dressed or undressed, to the accustomed signal. Nobody scolds her for these *scappature*; so I suppose she is well treated as far as temper is concerned."

He gave her a gold chain that he had bought for her, and talked to her of her mother. When he asked her what he should tell Mamma when he saw her, she said: "She must send me a kiss and a beautiful dress," and the dress "must be made of silk and gold." Her message to her father was that "he must come to see her, and bring her dear mother with him."

With a heart wrung by grief and remorse—for he had never been there in her lifetime—after the child's death in April, 1822, Byron visited the convent in August, hoping that his stormy soul might find some appeasement in seeing the

spot where she had lived. But for some undisclosed reason he went under an assumed name. He was constantly doing the unexplained and the mysterious.

Shelley returned from his brief visit with memories of Allegra as being very winning and lovely; and he has left no adverse comment on her treatment by the nuns. They were apparently kind to her and petted her. Her youthful innocence and pathetic story were calculated to inspire them with tenderness; and, moreover, Byron paid them double fees for keeping and instructing her. Under Teresa's influence, forgetful of the early Calvinistic instruction that he had received at the hands of pious Mary Gray, his nurse of the Kirk and Catechism, he had determined, as he told Hoppner, that Allegra should be reared in the Catholic faith; while she was at Bagna-Cavallo, he endeavored to find a suitable place of a similar character near him at Pisa.

In the meantime Clare had concluded to leave Florence and go to Vienna, where her brother Charles was then living. Before executing this plan, having long been without news of Allegra, and growing desperately anxious about her, she sought to persuade Byron to let her see her daughter. She wrote to him, entreating him to arrange for a visit or an interview. He took no notice of her letter, and the Shelleys were afraid to approach him on the subject, as he had been heard to threaten that if he were further annoyed about the child he would immure her in some secret Catholic retreat where no one could find her or hear of her again.

Clare worked herself into a frenzy of fear and rage, and wrote the Shelleys repeated letters, imploring their aid and suggesting fantastic plans for taking Allegra by armed force.

Shelley convinced her of the folly and impracticability of such a scheme; and with despairing heart and numbed brain she abandoned it.

Shelley wrote to Clare, inviting her to come to him and Mary at Pisa, saying that she would have quiet and privacy and freedom from annoyance until something might possibly be done about Allegra, and adding that when they secured a house on the Bay at Spezzia, as they proposed doing, they would take her with them.

She accepted the invitation and joined them on the 15th of April, 1822. No house could be found for a time, and about a week after her arrival she and Shelley's friends, the Williamses, went off to Spezzia to make a further search for a dwelling. They had hardly got well on their way when the news came to the Shelleys that Allegra had died of typhus fever in the convent.

In a few days the travelers returned. When Williams saw Shelley, he read in his face the signs of some dire calamity. Clare's child was dead, and it fell upon Shelley to devise a method of breaking the heart-rending news to her. Fearing that she would learn it in some manner that might terribly startle and shock her, and deeply distressed at having to tell her, he determined to get her away from Pisa before informing her. He had discovered that an unfurnished house was to be let, the Casa Magni, on the Bay of Lerici, near Spezzia. Thither they must go, and immediately.

Mary, Clare, and little Percy, escorted by Trelawny, who had become the intimate associate of the Shelleys, went to Casa Magni. It had been settled that Shelley and the Williamses were to take the house together; and Clare, finding

their new quarters uncomfortably crowded, decided to return to Florence. Shelley was compelled, without further delay, to tell her of the death of her daughter, which he did with great compassion.

Her grief was excessive, but she was a woman of fine courage and, in every crisis, of great self-control. The first agony of her sorrow was succeeded by a calmness that was surprising even to her friends. The pain of her protracted and feverish anxiety was at an end. There was no longer any fear or any hope. Life, in her contemplation, was unendurable without resignation.

They persuaded her to stay on at the Casa Magni for three weeks, and she then returned to Florence. Mary Shelley, whose only reference in her "Diary" to the child's death, is "Evil news. Not well," later wrote to Mrs. Gisborne detailing the occurrence, and stating that Allegra "died of a typhus fever which had been raging in the Romagna; but no one wrote to say it was there. She had no friends except the nuns of the convent, who were kind to her, I believe; but you know Italians. If half of the convent had died of the plague, they would never have written to have had her removed, and so the poor child fell a sacrifice."

She adds: "Lord Byron felt the loss at first bitterly; he also felt remorse, for he felt that he had acted against everybody's counsel and wishes, and death had stamped with truth the many and often urged prophecies of Clare that the air of the Romagna, joined to the ignorance of the Italians, would prove fatal to her."

She had forgotten that she and Shelley had approved her father's placing the child in the convent a year and a half



before, and that Byron had written to express his pleasure that they did so.

Williams and Shelley had hoped to lease separate houses at Lerici; but, as no furnished house of any kind proved available, they bundled all their joint belongings into the Casa Magni, and occupied it together. The result was inevitable. The house was small and crowded with the two families; and, during the time that Clare remained in Florence before returning to Lerici, Shelley wrote to her of the domestic squabbles that arose between Jane Williams and Mary from their having to keep house out of the same kitchen.

Casa Magni, intimately associated with Shelley's last days and death, was beautifully situated on the shore of the sea which he loved, and behind it rose the woody hills. Trelawny and Hunt and others of their friends came often to visit them and, in spite of Jane's and Mary's kitchen rows and the general lack of comfort, the time which its occupants spent there was, save for Allegra's death, not an unhappy one. There was a terrace along the seashore, where Williams and Shelley were fond of walking together, and from which one evening Shelley saw a strange vision soon after they learned that the child was dead.

Williams says in his "Diary," under date of May 6, "After tea, walking with Shelley on the terrace, and observing the effect of moonshine on the waters, he complained of being unusually nervous, and stopping short, he grasped me violently by the arm and stared steadfastly on the white surf that broke upon the beach under our feet. Observing him sensibly affected, I demanded of him if he were in pain. But

he only answered me by saying: "There it is again—there!" He recovered after some time, and declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me, a naked child (*Allegra*) rise from the sea, and clap its hands as if in joy, smiling at him."

Out of his deep distress at the loss of his little daughter, Byron had written to Shelley: "The blow was stunning and unexpected. . . . I do not know that I have anything to reproach in my conduct, and certainly nothing in my feelings and intentions towards the dead. But it is a moment when we are apt to think that, if this or that had been done, such events might have been prevented,—though every day and hour shows us that they are the most natural and inevitable. I suppose that Time will do his usual work—Death has done his."

He sent Clare, through Shelley, a lock of *Allegra's* hair and a miniature which she had asked for. She kept them to the day of her death. He had been willing to let her decide about the funeral; but she left it to him.

He determined that the body should be sent to England to be buried in the church at Harrow, associated with his boyhood. He sought the assistance of Murray in making the necessary arrangements, who made application to the clergyman in charge for permission to carry out his wishes. These included the erection of a tablet with an inscription that he had prepared. Murray wrote to the vicar, who replied with an expression of his willingness to comply with the wish of Lord Byron. He added, however, the query whether it might not be practicable and desirable to fulfill only a part of his Lordship's desire by burying the child, and putting up a tablet with simply its name, thus leaving to Lord Byron more

leisure to reflect upon the character of the inscription to be subsequently added. He was "constrained to say that the inscription he proposed will be felt by every man of refined taste, to say nothing of sound morals, to be an offense against taste and propriety"; and he added that he had seen no person who did not concur in the fitness of his stating this opinion.

The inscription to which the vicar made objection was this:

"In memory of Allegra, daughter of G. G., Lord Byron, who died at Bagna Cavaïlo in Italy April 20, 1822, Aged Five Years and Three Months,—'I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.'—2 Samuel, xii, 23."

The clergyman, in concluding his letter to Murray, after expressing his desire that Lord Byron should be assured of his "unwillingness to oppose the smallest obstacle to his wishes, or give the slightest pain to his mind," added: "The injury which, in my judgment, he is from day to day inflicting upon society is no justification for measures of retaliation and unkindness."

The application for Allegra's burial and the erection of the tablet in the church was submitted to the wardens, who "as to ex-parishioners" were required to be consulted. They objected to the admission of "the tablet of Lord Byron's child into the church."

After long delay the little body was buried at the church door through which the congregation enters, and the tablet was never made.

In *Julian and Maddalo*, written at Byron's villa near Este, after his ride with him on the Lido, Shelley had said of Allegra:

"The following morn was rainy, cold and dim.  
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,  
And whilst I waited, with his child I played;  
A lovelier toy sweet nature never made,  
A serious, subtle, wild yet gentle being,  
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing,  
With eyes—oh, speak not of her eyes!—which seem  
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam  
With such deep meaning, as we never see  
But in the human countenance. With me  
She was a special favorite: I had nurst  
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first  
To this bleak world; and yet she seemed to know  
On second sight her ancient playfellow,  
Less changed than she was by six months or so;  
For after her first shyness was worn out  
We sate there, rolling billiard-balls about,  
When the Count entered."

One of Byron's confidential monologues to Lady Blessington, in which he alluded with deep feeling to the loss of his child, made a strong impression on her. They had been talking of the Countess Guiccioli, and he said: "The truth is, my habits are not those requisite to form the happiness of any woman. I am worn out in feelings, for though only thirty-six, I feel sixty in mind, and am less capable than ever of those nameless attentions that all women, above all, Italian women, require. I like solitude, which has become absolutely necessary to me; am fond of shutting myself up for hours, and when with the person I like, am often *distract* and gloomy. There is something, I am convinced, in the poetical temperament that precludes happiness, not only in the person who has it, but to those connected with him. Do not accuse me of vanity because I say this, as my belief is that

the worst poet may share this misfortune in common with the best. The way in which I account for it is that our imaginations, being warmer than our hearts and much more given to wander, the latter have not the power to control the former, hence soon after our passions are gratified, imagination again takes wing, and finding the insufficiency of actual indulgence beyond the moment, abandons itself to all its wayward fancies, and during this abandonment becomes cold and insensible to the demands of affection.

"This is our misfortune and not our fault, and dearly do we expiate it; by it we are rendered incapable of sympathy, and cannot lighten, by sharing, the pain we inflict. . . . But let the object of affection be snatched away by death, and how is all the pain ever inflicted on them avenged! The same imagination that led us to slight or overlook their suffering, now that they are lost to us, magnifies their estimable qualities and increases tenfold the affection we ever felt for them.

"Oh, what are thousand living loves  
To that which cannot quit the dead?"

"How did I feel this when Allegra, my daughter, died! While she lived, her existence never seemed necessary to my happiness; but no sooner did I lose her than it appeared to me that I could not live without her. Even now the recollection is most bitter."

Moore wrote in his "Diary" for June 21, 1822: "A long letter from Lord Byron today; he has lost his little natural daughter . . . and seems to feel it a good deal. When I was at Venice, he said, in showing me this child, 'I suppose

you have some notion of what they call the parental feeling, but I confess I have it not; this little thing amuses me, but that's all.' This, however, was evidently all affected; he feels much more naturally than he will allow."

## XX

### FATE

**A**S though driven together by some portentous fate there had gathered at Pisa and in its vicinity in the months preceding Allegra's death the *dramatis personæ* of a great tragedy.

In the summer before the Shelleys went to Lerici they had formed the acquaintance of Edward Elleker Williams and his wife, Jane, who soon became their intimate friends and associates. Williams had been in the English Navy, and later a commissioned officer of the Dragoon Guards in India. He was about Shelley's age and was a man of agreeable character and literary inclinations; and his wife, some years his junior, was pretty and attractive. Their associations with Shelley and Mary while in Pisa were congenial and close; and when the Shelleys determined to take the house on the Bay of Spezzia it was agreed that the Williamses should also go there. Williams, like Shelley, was fond of the sea, and they were frequently on the water together; and Mary and Jane Williams, in spite of their occasional squabbles over the confined quarters of Casa Magni, became strongly attached to each other.

Another of this remarkable company of young English people at Pisa was Shelley's cousin and former schoolmate, Thomas Medwin, himself a poet and joint author with him

of some of his boyish literary productions. Medwin was a dreary bore; but Shelley was patient with him and kind to him. As did Trelawny and Hunt, who joined the colony later with his wife and children, Medwin after his death wrote a book about Byron, which aroused violent adverse criticism and caused *Blackwood's Magazine* to accuse the author of circulating "stale scandals, the very falsehood of which was not original."

The most picturesque figure of the company that was destined to see the last of Shelley was Edward John Trelawny, whose life thenceforward became a part of the lives of Byron and Mary Shelley and Clare Clairmont and whose depiction of Byron, after a hundred years, remains the most vivid and accurate account of any given by his personal acquaintances.

Trelawny was the scion of a prominent family in Cornwall, "so proud of their antiquity," as he says in his autobiographic *Adventures of a Younger Son*, "that even gout and mortgaged estates were traced many generations back on the genealogical tree as ancient heirlooms of aristocratic origin, and therefore revered." He relates that he came into the world "branded and denounced as a vagrant." He was lawless as a boy, and in the schoolroom was in the lowest class, but out of it the leader in all sports and mischief. He was considered by his teacher "the most obdurate, violent and incorrigible rascal that had ever fallen under his hands." He fought the usher and, when confined as a punishment, set fire to the room. He was sent home under guard, and his father, cursing his fate at having such a son, resolved to get rid of him. He was put into the Navy, where he studied





EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY  
FROM THE WOODCUT BY D. LUCAS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

drawing and navigation and, with an insatiate love of books and knowledge, read everything he could lay his hands on; and was especially interested in learning from the officers and sailors about India and the islands of the sea bordering Asia. He left the Navy and for years pursued the roving life of a buccaneer and a pirate in Eastern waters.

At the age of twenty-eight, while on the Continent, he learned that Shelley and Byron were sojourning at Pisa, and wrote to Williams, whom he knew, expressing a great desire to meet them. He found Shelley in the palace on the Lung' Arno, where he and Mary were living with the Williamses in different stories of the same house. Shelley with a book in his hand came into the room that Trelawny had just entered. The Buccaneer gazed at the young poet with rapt attention, as at Jane Williams' request he translated passages from the Spanish poet Calderon with the ease and facility with which he would have read a page from an English author. When the translation was finished, Trelawny sat spellbound and silent; and Shelley vanished.

The next day they went to see Byron. The Cornishman and the two poets were thenceforward constantly together. They rode horseback, and engaged in pistol shooting contests; they haunted the local waters and Trelawny became an intimate and familiar in the Shelley household.

Mary Shelley describes him in her "Diary" a few days after his arrival at Pisa:

"Trelawny is extravagant—'un giovane stravagante'—partly natural, and partly, perhaps, put on, but it suits him well; and if his abrupt but not unpolished manners be assumed, they are nevertheless in unison with his Moorish face

(for he looks Oriental yet not Asiatic), his dark hair, his Herculean form; and then there is an air of extreme good-nature which pervades his whole countenance, and especially when he smiles, which assures me that his heart is good."

His personality and character were calculated to touch the imagination of romantic females. He had the *insouciance*, the dash, the self-confident bearing, the courage and stalwart manliness, that carried an irresistible charm to the hearts of men and women alike; and Mary never had reason to change her first opinion of his kindness.

Leigh Hunt was another of the *coterie*, the "Harold Skimpole" of Dickens' novel, hypochondriac and poverty-stricken, whom Byron had brought over from England to engage in the later disastrous enterprise of *The Liberal*.

Another less prominent figure was Trelawny's friend Captain Roberts, a sturdy professional sailor and a fine fellow, who had accompanied him to Pisa.

Byron, who was a sea-lover—though the Cornishman said of him that he knew more about fresh water than salt—found the long-haired, gray-eyed buccaneer, who had spent a large part of his life in the Asiatic seas, and his companion, Captain Roberts, seasoned seamen; and, with Shelley, they were often together sailing the coast waters of the Mediterranean.

Mary Shelley wrote in her "Diary": "Lord Byron remains with his train at Monte Nero. Trelawny is to be the commander of his vessel, and of course will be at Leghorn. He is at present at Genoa, awaiting the finishing of this boat."

Another boat had been constructed for Shelley, which was to have been owned in partnership with Williams and Trelawny. At the Cornishman's suggestion the name *Don*

*Juan* was chosen for her; but when Shelley shortly afterwards became the sole owner he and Mary changed it to the *Ariel*. Byron took umbrage at this, and wrote to Roberts to have the name *Don Juan* painted on the mainsail before the boat was sent to Shelley. This was done, and aroused the indignation of Mary. She says: "For days and nights, full twenty-one, Shelley and Edward pondered on the anabaptism and the washing out of the primeval stain." It was she who pondered more deeply than they.

They tried turpentine, spirits of wine, buccata; and the canvas with the obnoxious name became "dappled," and no more. They had the sail taken out and a new one put in.

"I do not know," said the pugnacious Mrs. Shelley, "what Lord Byron will say; but Lord and Poet as he is, he could not be allowed to make a coal-barge of our boat."

With serene contempt for the new name, Byron never spoke of this boat, in which Shelley and Williams afterwards met death, except as the *Don Juan*; and he thought it a suicidal vessel for those who should be in it in foul weather.

In the heat of the Italian summer Shelley went with Williams to Leghorn in the *Ariel*, and spent a week there and at Pisa with Hunt. In the afternoon of an intensely warm July day, under a sky that presaged bad weather, they said good-by to Hunt, and set sail for Lerici. A tremendous storm arose, such as is not infrequent on this coast. The frail little *Ariel*, twenty-four feet by eight feet, disappeared from the view of those watching it from the shore, and was swallowed up in the tumult of the tempest.

A week later the body of Williams, cast up by the waves, was found on the beach, and the next day that of Shelley was

discovered upon the shore near Via Reggio, three miles away. It was not until three weeks after the storm that the corpse of Charles Vivian, the young sailor-lad who was their sole companion in the boat and the only one of the three who could swim, was also found on the sea-sands. In one of Shelley's pockets was Keats' last book *Lamia*, which he had told Hunt, who had lent it to him on his departure for home, he would not part with until he should see him again. In his other pocket was a volume of Sophocles which is now in the Bodleian Library.

The bodies were temporarily buried where they were found; and as the Tuscan sanitary laws forbade their removal, it was determined by Byron, Hunt, and Trelawny in conference, to burn them. Nearly a month after their discovery and local interment, the body of Williams was cremated in an iron frame, designed by Trelawny and made for the purpose, and on the next day, in the same frame, Trelawny burned Shelley's corpse in the presence of Byron and Hunt and a few others.

Medwin, who was unable to attend the ceremonial holocaust, had ridden with Shelley and Byron a few weeks before past the spot, marked by an old withered pine tree. Near it on the beach stood a solitary hut, thatched with straw. It was a desolate scene.

"Before them," he says in his account of the cremation "lay a wide expanse of the blue Mediterranean, with the islands of Elba and Gorgona visible in front; Lord Byron's yacht, the *Bolivar*, riding at anchor at some distance in the offing. On the other side appeared an almost illimitable sandy wilderness, and uninhabitable, only broken here and

there by shrubs twisted by the sea-breeze and stunted by the barrenness and drought of the ground in which they strove to grow. At equi-distance along the coast rose high, square towers, for the double purpose of protecting the coast from smugglers and enforcing the quarantine resolutions. This view was completed by a range of the far-off Italian Alps, that from their many folded and volcanic character, as well as from their marble summits, gave them the appearance of glittering snow."

While the flames were ascending from Shelley's funeral-pyre, close to which stood Trelawny, a solitary curlew with shrill cries flew repeatedly towards the fire, and almost into the Cornishman's face, and could with difficulty be driven away. To the superstitious soul of Byron the bird might well have been the spirit of Allegra seeking communion with the last mortality of the poet who had loved her.

Both Hunt and Trelawny have left accounts of the incineration of Shelley's body. Gossip and scandal which had pursued the dead man through life were not lacking to these last rites. The trio, Byron, Trelawny, and Hunt, were accused of wishing to make a sensation and of doing a horrible and unfeeling thing. But the nearest relations of both Williams and Shelley wished that they might be entombed in customary places of burial; and their bodies could be removed for that purpose in no other manner than by burning them and interring the ashes.

The cremation was performed with all the dignity and ceremony of an antique sacrifice. Hunt says: "Among the materials for burning, as many of the gracefuller and more classical articles as could be procured—frankincense, wine,

etc.—were not forgotten”; and he speaks of the extraordinary beauty of the flame arising from the funeral pile.

Byron, with some soldiers of the coast guard, stood at a little distance from the pyre during a period of the long time before the flames died down; and then, overcome with nervousness, he plunged into the water and swam out to the *Bolivar* and back again. Hunt, indisposed and low-spirited, remained dejectedly seated in the carriage near by; while the giant Trelawny, with scorched face and blistered hands, indomitably stirred the embers and heaped on the fuel.

“Byron asked me to preserve the skull for him,” says the Buccaneer, “but remembering that he had formerly used one for a drinking cup, I was determined that Shelley’s should not be so profaned.”

The superstition of the Highland Scot was in Byron’s blood. He knew the legendary beliefs and feelings of the Gael, and that one of them was that to drink from a skull, and especially a suicide’s skull, fends off epilepsy. He considered Shelley a suicide for going out in the *Ariel* in the face of a storm. He remembered that he could not swim; and he had seen him once on Lake Lemman, in a similar tempest, calmly grasp the side of a row boat and await the death that seemed inevitable. His mother had feared epilepsy, and he, too, had the inherited and inculcated dread of it.

When all else of Shelley’s body had been burned to ashes, his heart remained. Trelawny snatched it from the red hot embers, and handed it to Hunt, who, after a strange dispute with Mary Shelley as to who was entitled to the ownership, surrendered it to her. It was her custom, as long as she lived,

to carry the gruesome relic with her in her travels, wrapped in a silken shroud; and when Sir Percy Shelley was buried in 1889 in his mother's grave at Bournemouth, his father's heart was deposited in the coffin, enclosed in a silver case, in compliance with her wish.

Trelawny placed the young poet's ashes in an oaken chest, which was sent to Rome and interred there in the English cemetery, near the tomb of Caius Cestius, not far from the graves of his little son, William, and of "Adonais."

: The violets still bloom there through the Italian winter.

A strange story of the subsequent conduct of the participants in Shelley's cremation is told by Galt.

"These antique ceremonies," he says, "were undoubtedly affecting; but the return of the mourners from the burning was the most appalling orgia, without the horror of crime, of which I have ever heard. When the duty was done and the ashes collected, they dined and drank much together, and bursting from the calm mastery with which they had repressed their feelings during the solemnity, gave way to frantic exultation. They were all drunk; they sang, they shouted, and their barouche was driven like a whirlwind through the forest. I can conceive nothing descriptive of the demoniac revelry of that flight but scraps of the dead man's own song of Faust, Mephistopheles and Ignis Fatuus, in alternate chorus."



## XXI

### WRECKAGE

**T**HE body of Shelley had been discovered by Captain Roberts after a long search; and he wrote to Trelawny telling him that he had found it. Clare opened the letter. The three women at Casa Magni after the storm had continued to hope against hope; and Clare—who, with some subtle instinct of calamity, had returned to Lerici from Florence—felt that to communicate the dreadful news to either Mary or Jane Williams was beyond her most loving power. She hurriedly wrote to Hunt for advice, and begged him to reply as soon as possible, saying that she could not break it to them, and that stricken and suffering as she was in her own recent sorrow, she felt herself incapable of affording them consolation, and incompetent to cope with the first burst of their dreadful despair. She concluded by telling him that their situation was a desperate one in every respect; and concluded that “death would be the greatest kindness to us all.”

She had hardly sent off her letter when Trelawny appeared. He had seen the bodies and had hurried at once to Casa Magni. A maid-servant, crossing the hall, perceived him in the doorway and, knowing the anxious suspense of the women, gave a shriek. He went upstairs and entered unannounced the room where Mary and Jane Williams were waiting in an agony of anticipation.

He uttered no word, but stood looking at them with an expression on his dark face that told of tragedy. Mary exclaimed, "Is there no hope?" and he turned away without replying. He left the room and sent the servant to them with the children. The next day he took them all in his friendly charge to stay with the Hunts at Pisa.

Before burning the bodies of Williams and Shelley, Trelawny had engaged two feluccas and their crews and tackle to locate, if possible, the place where the *Ariel* went down. They proceeded to the spot at which she had last been visible, and ascertained that the boat had sunk there. The undirected efforts of the sailors failed to get her to the surface, and the indefatigable Buccaneer wrote to Captain Roberts, who was then at Genoa, asking him to go and "complete the business."

Roberts succeeded in raising the boat and, taking her to Via Reggio, anchored her. Some days later he informed Trelawny that, acting on Byron's advice, he had sold the *Ariel* at auction, and that she had fetched something more than two hundred dollars, which he had distributed to the crew of the felucca that had been employed in raising her. He found in the hull clothes, books, a spy glass and other articles. There were two of Shelley's memorandum books in good condition, and another that was damaged by the water; and he also discovered a journal kept by Williams, that was quite legible and had been brought down to a very recent date.

He washed the printed books, some of which were so covered with mud and slime that their leaves could not be separated. These printed relics he turned over to Byron. Williams's journal, the letters, and private papers, he left in

charge of Hunt, as he had seen in them "many severe remarks on Lord B."

Mary and Jane Williams made an arrangement to go with the Hunts to stay temporarily at Genoa, and Clare went from Pisa, where they had all gone with Trelawny from Casa Magni, to join her brother, Charles, in Vienna.

Mary and her little boy lived with the Hunts and their six children for nearly a year. It was not a pleasant experience; and the Hunt progeny, who were allowed to do as they chose "until such time as they were of an age to be reasoned with," were especially disagreeable. Byron, in a letter to Mary, said of them: "Poor Hunt, with his six little blackguards,—was there ever such a kraal out of a Hottentot country before?"

He had been very kind and generous to Mary Shelley during her stay at Pisa after her husband's death, and came to see her in her new quarters in Genoa. His kindness to those who were in distress was always unfailing. She was in straitened circumstances, and had an uncertain future staring her in the face. He wrote to her, offering to be her banker until her difficulties should be at an end; and he interested himself in efforts to induce Sir Timothy Shelley to make some provision for her and for his little grandson. With the courtesy of which he was a past-master, when he chose to exercise it, he justified himself for the intrusion by adducing to Sir Timothy his friendship for Shelley and his desire to alleviate the destitute condition of his widow and their child.

The devoted Trelawny, moved by an unforgetting affection for the dead poet and by compassion for the deplorable state of Mary and her boy, when absent from Genoa kept up

a correspondence with her. He wrote to tell her about Shelley's burial-place,—how he had built two tombs in a niche formed by the buttresses in the old Roman wall under the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, in one of which Shelley's ashes reposed. The other, he said, was intended for himself. He wrote: "I have likewise dug my grave, so that when I die there is only to lift up my coverlet and roll me into it." He naïvely added: "You may lie on the other side, if you like. It is a lovely spot."

Not only had Shelley's widow fallen on evil days, but also had Hunt and his wife and the six little Hottentots. *The Liberal*, which had been established as the result of Hunt's coming to Italy, proved a failure, and ended after the publication of the fourth number. Byron has been more than generous to Hunt in his capacity of editor, as well as to Hunt's brother, John, who was its publisher, by making several notable contributions to it, and by carrying out his promise of giving it his unrestricted support.

After a coolness had grown up between him and Murray over the sixth Canto of *Don Juan*, which its author sometimes facetiously spoke of as "Donnie Johnnie," Hunt continued to publish whatever came from the poet's pen. But Byron, for the copyrights of whose books that he had published Murray had paid an aggregate of seventy-five thousand dollars, became apparently more money-loving as he grew older; and the financial failure of *The Liberal* was a great disappointment to him. The Greek business had already begun to take shape in his mind. If some day he might perchance become king of the liberated Greeks, he would need money, and as much as might be saved or raised.

Shelley, in inviting Hunt at Byron's request to come to Italy, had hoped that the periodical would put the impoverished writer on his feet. When it failed, the literary *fiasco* resulted not only in pecuniary loss to Byron, but had its aftermath in a furious dislike on Hunt's part for his patron and coadjutor. *The Liberal* was one of the many tragedies of Byron's life.

Mary Shelley, in her extremity, hoped that Sir Timothy would do something for her on account of her son. Byron came to Genoa, where she had engaged for him at his request the Casa Saluzzo at Albaro, while she and the Hunts took the Casa Negroto nearby. When she saw him again after an absence of a month, the sound of his voice awoke in her melancholy memories of the past. She recalled the days and nights at Geneva, in 1816, when she and Clare and Byron and Shelley had been together, care-free and happy, and she remembered their moonlit nights on the Lake and the long conversations between the two poets. Now, as she listened to his melodious speech, she hearkened as though in expectation of again hearing that other musical voice which death had forever stilled.

In his genuine and unselfish sympathy with Mary, and moved by an earnest desire to help her, he had written his solicitor in England asking him to consult with Godwin about Shelley's affairs, and to ascertain from Sir Timothy's lawyer if any provision had been made for her and for her son. He also asked his own solicitor for an opinion on Shelley's will, of which he knew that he was an executor. These efforts had been in vain. Sir Timothy's lawyer refused to see Byron's; and Mary, disappointed yet still hoping, wrote to Clare:

"This does not look like an absolute refusal; but Sir Timothy is so capricious that we cannot trust to appearances."

Byron's letter to her father-in-law followed, and while she was waiting to hear the result of it she received a communication from the ever kind and generous Trelawny.

He wrote: "There is not one now living has so tender a friendship for you as I have. I have the far greater claims on you, and I shall consider it a breach of friendship should you employ anyone else in services that I can execute.

"My purse, my person, my extremest means  
Lye all unlocked to your occasion."

"I hope you know my heart, so well as to make all professions needless."

Mary thanked him and wrote that she regarded him as her best friend, and would rather apply to him than to any one else, but that she had £33 which she had received from *The Liberal*, and still possessed the residue of the money she had brought from Pisa. She had enough to send some to Clare at Florence; and added, "Lord Byron continues kind; he has made frequent offers of money. I do not want it, as you see."

Sir Timothy replied to Byron's letter, offering to give to his grandchild suitable protection and care in England, if the boy should be placed with a person he approved.

Mary was indignant at this offer to bestow on his grandson, not "an asylum in his own house, but a beggarly provision under the care of a stranger." She would not consent to part with him. She made her preparations to go back to England, and told Byron she was ready to start. He promised to furnish her money and to make all necessary arrange-

ments for her journey, but with his habit of procrastination, which was a besetting sin, he kept her waiting, and then undertook to carry on the negotiations through Hunt, who was living under the same roof with her at Albaro.

Mary, nervous, impatient, petulant, and worried by his delay, wrote to Jane Williams that Byron gave such an air of unwillingness and sense of the obligation he conferred, as at last provoked Hunt to say that there was no obligation, since he owed him £1000; and she added that while he was "still keeping up an appearance of amity with Hunt, he has written notes and letters so full of contempt against me and my lost Shelley, that I could stand it no longer, and have refused to receive his still proffered aid for my journey."

All of this was absolutely unjust and unkind to Byron. He wanted to help her. She had worn him out with the uncertainty of her plans; and he, in turn, losing patience, wrote to Hunt, who was in a state of huffiness about *The Liberal*, that he had "received a note from Mrs. S. with a fifth or sixth change of plan, viz. not to make her journey at all, at least through my assistance on account of what she is pleased to call 'estrangement, etc.' " He added that he would advance the money to Hunt, who could tell her that he (Hunt) had raised it as a loan on his own account, and that it was Hunt's advancement to her. Then he lost his Gight temper completely, and let himself loose.

"I am not aware of anything in the transaction," he added, "which can render it obnoxious to yourself,—at least, I am sure that there is no such intention on my part, nor ever was in anything which has passed between us,—although there are circumstances so plausible, and scoundrels so ready in

every corner of the earth to give a color of their own to everything; the last observation is dictated by what you told me to-day to my utter astonishment; it will however teach me to know my company better or not at all.

“And now pray, do not apply or misapply directly or indirectly to yourself any of these observations.

“I knew you long before Mr. S. knew either you or me; and you and two more of his friends are the only ones whom I can at all reflect upon as men whose acquaintance was honorable and agreeable. I have one more thing to state, which is that from this moment I must decline the office of acting as his executor in any respect, and also all further connection with his family in any of its branches, now or hereafter.

“There was something about a legacy of two thousand pounds, which he had left me; this of course I decline, and the more so that I hear that his will is admitted valid: and I state this distinctly, that in case of anything happening to me, my heirs may be instructed not to claim it.”

Here was wreckage: their pleasure-boat sunk, two young lives lost, broken friendships, enmities, separations. Out of it all the sole remaining thing of comfort for Clare and Mary Shelley was the attachment of the wild buccaneer, Trelawny.

Mary did not see Byron again, who sailed for Greece six days before she left Genoa for England. She had been impatient and unjust and unkind to him. He was more than willing to help her; but he had stood her tantrums until they had become too much for his own reluctant patience to permit.

“His unconquerable avarice,” she spitefully said, “prevented his supplying me with money, and a remnant of shame caused him to avoid me. If he were mean, Trelawny



more than balanced the moral account. His whole conduct during his last stay here has impressed us all with an affectionate regard and a perfect faith in the unalterable goodness of his heart. They sailed together: Lord Byron with £10,000, Trelawny with £50, and Lord Byron cowering before his eye for reasons you shall hear soon." No one ever heard these terrible reasons.

Byron, from the proceeds of his poems and the sale of Newstead Abbey in 1817 for £94,500, was rich. Trelawny had very little.

The Cornishman's compassion and sympathy for Shelley's young widow developed into love. He and Mary continued to keep up a correspondence after her return to England, in which he would call her "Mary, dear," and she would sign herself "affectionately yours." Eight years after she went back to England she wrote him: "My name will never be Trelawny. I am not so young as I was when you first knew me, but I am as proud. I must have the entire affection, devotion, and above all, the solicitous protection of any one who would win me. You belong to womenkind in general, and Mary Shelley will never be yours."

## XXII

### CLARE

**I**N the household of Shelley had lived for a long time as a servant the Swiss woman, Elise Foggi, who was sent with Allegra to Venice as a nurse. She had been an efficient and valuable domestic, and the Shelleys thought highly of her. Elise formed an illicit connection with Paolo, their Italian man-servant, the result of which was that her sickness disclosed her situation to her employers. They were much troubled by the discovery, and thinking that it would not do to turn Elise out alone on a cold world, with an inconsistency which did not coincide with the views that they had exemplified in their own conduct in regard to matrimony, they concluded that it was their duty to compel her and Paolo to get married. This determination was Mary's business, and seemed prompted solely by her solicitude for Elise's welfare. The immediate result was that Elise, not wishing to marry, kicked loose and they lost their nurse. But there were other and more tragic consequences.

Paolo, also offended, attempted to blackmail Shelley; and the Hoppners were told a hideous story by Elise, about him and Clare, which the Consul-General communicated to Byron in a letter written from Venice on the 16th of October, 1820. It was, in effect, that at the time the Shelleys were at Venice, Clare was with child by Shelley, and that it was for this

reason she preferred remaining alone in the villa at Este, notwithstanding her mortal fear of ghosts and robbers, to staying with the Shelleys in the city. The letter continued, that when Clare and the Shelleys moved to Naples, he was called up to see Clare who was very ill; that his wife thought it strange for him to be sent for, but that, though she was not aware of any improper connection between them, she had had sufficient proof of her husband's indifference and Clare's hatred for her; and that, besides, as Shelley desired her to remain quiet, she did not interfere.

The letter further stated that a midwife was called in, and when the child was born she was bribed to take it half an hour after birth to the "Pieta," where the physician was paid to keep quiet; and that Mrs. Shelley had not been allowed to approach her, while Clare had since done everything to persuade Shelley to leave his wife.

Hoppner said that Elise, who had been in Venice during the summer with an English lady, who spoke most highly of her, had given them this story; and had added that Clare did not hesitate to tell Mrs. Shelley that she wished her dead, and to say to Shelley, before her, that she wondered how she could live with such a creature. He concluded his communication with an astonishing vituperation of Shelley, and said that it was clear to him that honor did not direct any of his actions.

Byron, with continued animosity to Clare, replied to Hoppner that the story was probably true, though Elise was but a sort of "Queen's evidence;" and called his attention to the inconsistency of her eagerness to return to the Shelleys and of then going off and abusing them.

Hoppner had asked Byron in the letter not to tell the Shelleys about it, and Byron had promised to keep his counsel. Shelley, on Byron's invitation, went to see him at Ravenna; and they discussed the new cantos of *Don Juan* with great friendliness. But Hoppner's scandalous communication was in Byron's mind, and his unrestrained tongue was accustomed to utter to any and every person whatever popped into his head.

Of this idiosyncrasy Lady Blessington said: "He is an extraordinary person, indiscreet to a degree that is surprising, exposing his own feelings and entering into details of those of others that ought to be sacred with a degree of frankness as unnecessary as it is rare. Incontinence of speech is his besetting sin. He is, I am persuaded, incapable of keeping any secret, however it may concern his own honor or that of another."

In violation of Hoppner's confidence he told Shelley the story, and showed him the letter, assuring him that he did not accord the slightest belief to the tale.

Shelley, with the courage of innocence, wrote at once to Mary, telling her all that Elise had said, and advised her to write to the Hoppners. He added that it was unnecessary for him to dictate what she should say, or to inspire her with warmth to rebut a charge which she alone could effectually prove untrue.

Mary, indignant and outraged, wrote to Mrs. Hoppner, swearing "by the life of her child, her blessed, beloved child," that she knew the accusation was false, and asking her to write that she rejected as utterly incredible every circumstance of Elise's infamous story.

Shelley, at his request, gave Mary's letter to Byron, to be conveyed to Mrs. Hoppner; and after Byron's death it was discovered among his papers. She never heard from either Hoppner or his wife.

Both Byron's and Shelley's biographers have pointed to the story of his alleged intentional suppression of Mary Shelley's letter to Mrs. Hoppner as the darkest blot upon his character; and Froude, in an article in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1883, called attention to it as true. But Byron's memory has lately been freed from the charge.

It appears from his *Correspondence*, published in 1922, that the letter was found with a broken seal. The seal, which was Shelley's, was of red wax; and "at the top of the seal there was a drop of black sealing wax, with a scrap of paper attached to it." As Mary's letter to Mrs. Hoppner had borne no address, it seems to have been conveyed to its destination under another cover. The broken seal and the adherent scrap of paper attached by the black sealing wax, indicate that it was returned to Byron. The Hoppners were naturally indignant with him for having betrayed their confidence, and they realized that the Shelleys had read what Mr. Hoppner had written about them, and could wish for no further relations with them.

That Mary Shelley believed Mrs. Hoppner received the letter and refused to answer it, is indicated by her "cutting" her "completely" many years after, in 1843.

From Vienna, whither Clare went from Pisa before Shelley and his wife moved to Genoa, she journeyed to Russia, and there spent some time, teaching music and discharging the duties of a governess. During her residence in Moscow she

kept up an affectionate correspondence with Mary Shelley and with Jane Williams, to the latter of whom she was always warmly attached. She was a voluminous and charming correspondent and she gave many interesting views of Russian family and social life. Intellectual, versatile, and vivacious, she wrote with a sparkling pen her impressions of what she saw and heard, so interspersing her letter with entertaining and amusing story and comment as unconsciously to paint, in the distinction of her narrative, a vivid picture of her own personality. Her conduct and demeanor during this Russian sojourn, which she described as one of loneliness and often of hardship and skimping poverty, illustrated her dignity and courage. No breath of scandal attached to her name; and the energy and enthusiasm which had characterized her in the days when she used to accompany Shelley in his walks about the streets of London remained with her as long as she lived.

The great misfortune of her life was her tragic love-affair with Byron, in which she acted an impulsive part that was not dissimilar to Mary's first association with Shelley. But the world has judged the untrained child of an obscure father with a far harsher condemnation than that visited on the daughter of the once famous Godwin, and the mother of a wealthy knight who deservedly held high position among the first gentlemen of England.

Argument in Clare's vindication is unnecessary; for a comparison of the lives of the two romantic girls of nearly the same age, who on that summer morning of their eager and adventurous youth crossed the Channel in the boat with Shelley, must leave slight difference of opinion whether

either of them was more free from worldly blame than the other.

Clare's mind was active and well-informed, and her enforced absence from English associations and English people often weighed heavily on her in her life at Moscow. She wrote to Mary in 1825 of her wonder at what she and Jane Williams would do if they had to undergo the dull anti-pathetic routine that she daily trod: "no talk of public affairs, no discussion of books,—nothing save cards, eating, and the different manners of managing slaves."

She begged Mary to make herself mistress of "the Logier's System of teaching music," in order that she might communicate it to her in its smallest details. She thought it would prove popular and successful in Moscow and might be the means of her earning "a small independence" in the Russian city, after which they could go and live in Italy without fear for the future.

On leaving Russia she visited Dresden with the lady in whose family she was governess. She was charmed with Dresden, of which she wrote: "Here, as in Italy, you cannot walk the streets without meeting with some object which affords ready and agreeable occupation to the mind. I never yet was in a place where I met so much to please and so little to shock me. In vain I endeavor to recollect anything I wish otherwise; not a fault presents itself. The more I become acquainted with the town and see its smallness the more I am struck with the uncommon resources *e le belli arti* it possesses. With what regret shall I leave it for Vienna!"

Her enthusiasm was perennial, and the freshness of her

outlook on life kept her young. Now and then there is a flash of malice that lends spice to her gossiping.

"What says the world to Moore's *Lord Byron*?" she inquires of Mary. "I saw some extracts in a review, and cannot express the pleasure I experienced in finding that it was sad stuff. It was the journal of the Noble Lord, and I should say contained as fine a picture of indigestion as one could expect to meet in Dr. Paris, Graham or Johnson."

Later she became governess in Italy in the family of the daughter of her old friend, Lady Mountcashel; and with them her situation was more agreeable than theretofore. Her patroness made of her more of a companion than had been her experience in such positions, and looked upon her "with adoring admiration."

Her cheerfulness and unselfish alacrity at all times to assist her friends without sparing herself is illustrated in a letter that she wrote from Nice in December, 1830.

"Since I have been at Nice I have had to change lodgings four times; besides this, we were without a maid and received and paid innumerable visits. My whole day was spent in shifting my character. In the morning I arose a waiting maid, and having attended to the toilette of Natalie, sank into a housemaid, a laundry-maid, and after noon, I fear me, a cook, having to attend to the cleaning of the rooms, the getting up of linen, and various pottages for the patient near me. At midday I turned into a governess, gave my lessons, and at four or five became a fine lady for the rest of the day, and paid visits or received them; for at Nice it is the custom, so soon as a stranger arrives, that everybody *comme il faut* in the place comes to call on you; nor can you shut your



doors against them even if you were dying, for as Nice is the resort of the sick, and as everybody either is sick or has been sick, nursing has become the common business."

After sojourning in various continental cities, in which she met many interesting men and women whom she fascinated with her good humor and her sprightly talk, she visited Paris, where she spent some years. By his will Shelley had left her twelve thousand pounds in the disposition of a large estate in expectancy; and on the death of Sir Timothy Shelley in 1844 she came into her legacy. She went to London to live, and having no business capacity or experience she lost a large part of it in a disastrous theater venture.

Mary continued a correspondence with her, and Trelawny frequently sent her letters of friendship or love and often of bad spelling. In the letter, written in 1831, in which Mary told the Cornishman that her name "would never be Trelawny," she said, in reply to some remark of his about Clare: "I am infinitely chagrined at what you tell me concerning Clare. If the B.'s spoke against her, that means Mrs. B., and her stories were gathered from Lord Byron, who feared Clare and did not spare her; and the stories he told were such as to excuse the prejudice of any one."

For all her soft words to her stepsister and about her, Mary had never really liked her from the time when they were children together in Godwin's house. The quiet and demure Mary was always jealous of Shelley's regard for her, though Clare, who had no spark of jealousy in her disposition and was frank and open-hearted, never lost her friendship for Mary.

"I am very glad you are delighted with Trelawny," she

once wrote to her. "My affections are entirely without jealousy; the more those I love love others and are loved by them, the better pleased am I."

While Clare in her later years was in England she frequently visited at Field Place, the seat of Sir Percy Shelley. On one occasion when she was expected to make a visit there, Sir Percy's wife, who did not like her, expressed a half-formed purpose of absenting herself during her stay and leaving Mary Shelley to entertain her. The professedly affectionate and devoted Mary exclaimed: "Don't leave me alone with her! She has been the bane of my life ever since I was three years old!"

Clare finally left England and, going back to Italy, resided in Florence. Here, in a quaint dark room, furnished in the style of the '30's or '40's, with a picture of Shelley on the walls, William Graham, an impressionable English youth of some twenty years, paid her a visit in the latter part of her life and was fascinated with her autumnal beauty.

"She was a lovely old lady," he wrote of her; "the eyes still sparkled at times with irony and fun; the complexion was as clear as at eighteen, and the lovely white hair as beautiful in its way as the glossy black tresses of youth must have been; the slender, willowy figure had remained unaltered, as though time had held that sacred, and passed by."

She had become a Roman Catholic, and was then nearly eighty years old. Graham has been informed that she was a religious recluse; and on more than one occasion he saw the priests coming and going in the house. But the lively talk and persiflage of the vivacious old lady, whose voice was as clear as a bell, and whose hearing and intellect seemed

as youthful and acute as ever, left no impression on his mind of an austere indifference to the world.

The correctness of many things which he says she told him, and which at her express request he did not write out for publication until ten years later, has been challenged by the critics; and it is probable that in her old age she was garrulous and her memory uncertain. But in most of her stories there is a *vraisemblance* that is unmistakable and is indicative of the old charm that had won Byron's fickle fancy and Shelley's lasting admiration. She was "so witty and piquante that one forgot her age."

Her account of Byron has an inherent quality of truth. She said he was a thorough Scot, that his brilliancy and good looks he inherited to a great extent from "the Gay Gordons," his mother's family, and that his love of the bawbees and his inclination to dogmatic religion were both intensely Scottish. He had scotched, not killed the Scotsman in his birth; as he himself wrote in *Don Juan*. She said that he even wanted to secure both this world and the next in some canny Scottish fashion, and would "talk religion and predestination and other exploded doctrines with any old Presbyterian parson by the hour, without the remotest idea of practising any religion whatsoever."

"Roman Catholicism," she pleasantly observed, in regard to her own relations with the Church, "is such a comforting religion."

Among her stories was one that, if true, contradicts the accepted belief that Byron and Shelley never knew each other until their meeting at Geneva. She gave Graham to understand that at the beginning of her affair with Byron in

London, she had a quite clearly defined idea of some day becoming the second Lady Byron; and she said that the Shelleys knew all about her association with him, both in London and at Geneva. She related with much elaboration of details, that left no doubt of its being a vivid memory, how she told them about it before they went to Geneva, and how she excitedly burst into the house one day, exclaiming, "Percy! Mary! the great Lord Byron loves me!" She added naïvely that Shelley was quite pleased at her thus "forming a kind of brother-in-law of his mighty brother-bard, and laughed"; and when she related the episode to Graham she laughed too!

Before her visit to Geneva with the Shelleys to meet Byron by agreement, she had one day gone with him from London to Marlow, and on knocking at the door, found that the occupants chanced to be at the village inn. The lovers followed Shelley and Mary thither; and she narrated with evident enjoyment how Byron drank several glasses of foaming beer, and made the terrified landlord shout "*Vive l'Empereur*" for the benefit of some French prisoners of war who were billeted there.

Graham gives a pretty picture of her when he last saw her, waving one slim white hand to him from the window "with that never-to-be-forgotten smile on her lips, as with the other she toyed with the strings of the guitar given to her by Shelley more than sixty years before."

She died in Florence in her dwelling in the Via Romagna in 1879, and was buried in a cemetery at Trespignano, some four or five miles from the city.

She kept her dauntless courage and her enthusiasm to

the end, and told Graham that she loved Shelley “inexpressibly.”

She would have been an ingrate if she had not done so; for his generous kindness to her had been beyond praise.

## THE THIRD PART

### *Missolonghi and Hucknall-Torkard*

“And lone and chill the night-wind swept the hill,  
When o’er the yet uncoffined slain that strange dispute grew still:  
The old feud our kind inherit of the warring soul and spirit,—  
Man’s heart and man’s indomitable will.”

EDWARD SIDNEY TYLEE: *Trumpet  
and Flag.* (In The Spectator)

## XXIII

### A NEW COUNTESS

**I**N the spring following the eventful year in which Allegra died and Shelley was drowned Byron found a new and absorbing interest in another variety of Countess than the blonde Italian Teresa. He was attracted to women primarily by their beauty and youth. If they were brilliant and burnt incense at his shrine, so much the better; but there seems to be no instance of his friendship for any ugly woman solely for her intellectuality.

Although he professed a dislike to ladies whom he denominated "Blues," many of the objects of his affection were of the type. He said that he had "only once been attracted by an ignoramus"; and yet he delighted in decrying erudition in women.

Clare Clairmont declared of him, in her old age at Florence, that "after the first heats of passion women were to him pretty playthings, and no more"; and she also had learned by experience, that he "never could agree with any woman of much independence of thought." Something more than a year was as long as he was able to stand his wife, the "Cambridge wrangler," who wrote inaccurate estimates of his character and that of her other acquaintances; and the witty and vivacious Clare, who was an amusing mimic and tease, and had a way of vigorously asserting her own opinions, was quick to arouse his anger and animosity.

Teresa clung to him, and he tolerated her longer than any other woman; but he grew very bored with her devotion many months before he went to Greece.

"He was tired to death of La Guiccioli," said the reminiscient Clare, "whom he treated in a way that very few women would have stood."

In April, 1823, he was domiciled in the Casa Saluzzo at Albaro; and with him were the inevitable Gambas—the fair and loving Teresa, her father, and her handsome brother, Pietro. The Hunts and Mary Shelley were close by, in the Casa Negroti; and in Genoa, not far away, dawdled Trelawny, between whom and the others, except Mary Shelley, no longer continued that close intimacy which had been a part of their life at Pisa.

In this month there came to Genoa, Marguerite, Countess of Blessington, then on a continental tour; and with her were her husband, the Earl of Blessington, her sister, Miss Mary Anne Power, later the Comtesse de Marsault, and Count Alfred D'Orsay.

Lady Blessington was then in her thirty-fourth year. She was a younger daughter of Mr. Edmund Power of the County Tipperary, Ireland, a gentleman of good family, but of little fortune and of reckless habits. She had married, when she was fifteen years of age, Captain Farmer, who had caused her much unhappiness and from whom she separated. Farmer met with the tragic fate of falling from a window in the King's Bench prison, when drunk; and his attractive widow four months afterwards became the wife of the very respectable Earl of Blessington.

At the time of her visit to Genoa Lady Blessington was



amiable, fascinating, good-looking, cultivated, possessed of pleasing manners, and a member of the best society at home. She had already published two volumes of "Sketches," and had gained some literary reputation, which was enhanced at a subsequent time by her *Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron*. An American writer, who knew her five years afterwards, has described her as she then appeared:

"She looks something on the sunny side of thirty. Her person is full, but preserves all the fineness of an admirable shape; her foot is not pressed in a satin slipper for which a Cinderella might long be sought in vain; and her complexion (an unusually fair skin, with very dark hair and eyebrows) is of even a girlish delicacy and freshness. Her dress of blue satin was cut low and folded across her bosom in a way to show to advantage the round and sculpture-like curve and whiteness of a pair of exquisite shoulders; while her hair, dressed close to her head, and parted simply on her forehead with a rich *feronier* of turquoise enveloped in clear outline a head with which it would be difficult to find a fault. Her features are regular, and her mouth, the most expressive of them, has a ripe fullness and freedom of play peculiar to the Irish physiognomy, and expressive of the most unsuspecting good humor. Add to all this a voice merry and sad by turns, but always musical, and manners of the most unpretending elegance, yet even more remarkable for their winning kindness, and you have the prominent traits of one of the most lovely and fascinating women I have ever seen."

Byron had little liking for the companionship of his peripatetic countrymen on the continent; but when this charming creature by a ruse gained admittance to the Casa Saluzzo

and he beheld her in her matured loveliness, he forgot at once his antipathy to English tourists and his repugnance to "blue stockings."

On her arrival at Genoa, she had been thrilled with the possibility of seeing him next day, and hoped that he would not be fat, as Moore had described him at Venice; for she considered a fat poet an anomaly. The next afternoon her party of four drove in a drizzling rain to Byron's house, in order that Lord Blessington, a former acquaintance, might call on him.

"When we arrived at the court-yard of the Casa Saluzzo, in the village of Albaro, where he resides," she says, "Lord Blessington and a gentleman of our party left the carriage, and sent in their names. They were admitted immediately, and experienced a very cordial reception from Lord Byron, who expressed himself delighted to see his old acquaintance. Byron requested to be presented to me, which led to Lord Blessington's avowing that I was in the carriage at the gate, with my sister. Byron immediately hurried out into the court; and I, who heard the sound of his steps, looked through the gate and beheld him approaching quickly toward the carriage without his hat, and considerably in advance of the other two gentlemen."

He apologized for not coming out sooner, saying that his friend Lord Blessington was to blame for not having told him immediately on his arrival of the ladies' presence. With elegant urbanity he begged them to come into the house. He led them into a large room, plainly furnished, where a small portrait of Ada, hanging on the wall alongside of an engraving of himself, first struck Lady Blessington's eye. He saw

her looking at it, and taking it down handed it to her. She said that she thought it bore a strong resemblance to him. This pleased him, and added to the interest with which he regarded this new and pretty woman. But the old dislike of literary females cropped out. Taking the picture in his hand, he said, "I am told she is clever—I hope not; and, above all, I hope she is not poetical; the price paid for such advantages, if advantages they be, is such as to make me pray that my child may escape them."

They talked about their common English friends—Moore and Kinnaird and Ellice. He told her how the traveling English, most of whom he knew either slightly or not at all, pestered him with visits. He said that he was not compelled to receive any of them except those whom he especially wished to see.

"But," he added, smiling, "they avenge themselves by attacking me in every sort of way, and there is no story too impossible for the craving appetites of our slander-loving countrymen."

When they left he asked permission to call next day. The pretty eagerness and rapt attention with which the Irish Countess had listened to his talk about himself greatly flattered and pleased him. He bowed them into their carriage with insinuating compliments and expressions of the pleasure their visit had given him.

She went back to her hotel with a half-conscious sense of disillusion. She had expected so much, and she was especially disappointed in his appearance, which was different from what she had conceived through his portraits and the descriptions of him.

After she came to know him, she wrote: "I am sure that if ten individuals undertook the task of describing Byron, no two of the ten would agree in their verdict respecting him, or convey any portrait that resembled the other, and yet the descriptions of each might be correct according to his or received opinion,"—a singularly shrewd observation, as has been demonstrated by all that has been written about him.

In spite of his courtesy, she had a vague sense of his surmising that she had played a trick on him to get into the house. She did not like the scornful expression of his mouth, or the profuse amount of oil that he used on his hair. While he looked like a gentleman, his clothes appeared ready-made and did not fit him. Moreover, they were old and out of fashion. She thought that there was an awkwardness in his movements, which she attributed to his constant consciousness of his lameness, that seemed so slight as to render her unable to distinguish which foot it came from.

But his voice won her—clear, harmonious, distinct and low—that voice which Clare Clairmont said was his "great charm, and as melodious in its subtle variety of cadence as music itself."

She was not pleased with his manners. She had expected to find him a dignified, reserved and haughty person, resembling the romantic heroes of his poems; but she discovered that his most prominent defect was "flippancy," and that he had "a total want of that natural self-possession and dignity which ought to characterize a man of birth and education."

She was piqued by the uncertainty of her impressions;

and resented his not proving to be exactly as she had expected.

The visit of the Blessingtons to the Casa Saluzzo was promptly returned by Byron, and in no long time a close intimacy sprang up which continued without interruption through the eight weeks of her visit at Genoa. She talked to him about his wife; and without his apparently realizing that she was preaching she gave him to understand her disapproval of the badness of *Don Juan*. He spoke to her of Ada; and she told him that if he loved his daughter, as he professed, he ought never to write another line that could bring a blush of shame to her cheek or a tear to her eye.

He answered: "You are right. I never recollected this. I am jealously tenacious of the undivided sympathy of my daughter; and that work, written to beguile hours of *tristesse* and wretchedness, is well calculated to loosen my hold on her affections. I will write no more of it—would that I had never written a line."

He was probably fooling her with a pose. He had never seen Ada since he left her an infant in arms, when he quit England. He knew little about her, and she less of him.

He learned that one of Lady Blessington's near friends was in Genoa, and asked her to get for him, through this lady, a portrait of Lady Byron.

The appeals of the Irish Countess to his better nature she thought affected him; and Moore, in his *Life*, speaks of the happy influence her society had over him. With feminine vanity she imagined that she was winning him from his misanthropy. She felt disposed to think better of "this child

of genius" than most people did, because he so promptly responded to her wish to save him from himself.

On the last page of her *Conversations*, written after his death, she records her belief that "there was in Byron that which would have yet nobly redeemed the errors of his youth and the misuse of his genius, had length of years been granted him." She did not add what she may have thought: "If I had only had a little longer opportunity to reform him completely!"

But despite the reformation which she believed she was effecting, the "flippancy" of which she was conscious at their first meeting continued perceptible in his talk. He wished Lord Blessington to prolong his stay at Genoa, and he endeavored to induce him to take an adjoining residence called "Il Paradiso." He asked the Countess to accompany him to a masked ball to be given in the city, and daringly remarked that some one had suggested she should go as Eve. If she consented, he would take the part of the Devil. The idea so pleased him that he made it the theme of some doggerel verses which he gave her:

"Beneath Blessington's eyes  
The reclaimed Paradise  
Should be free as the former from evil;  
But if the new Eve  
For an apple should grieve,  
What mortal would not prove the Devil?"

She observed that his persiflage was most frequent when he was talking of persons for whom he professed regard. He told her he was afraid of losing her good opinion by his frankness, but that when the fit was on him he could not

help saying what he thought, though he often repented it when too late.

She said of him: "The more I see of Byron the more I am convinced that all he says and does should be judged more leniently than the sayings and doings of others—as his words proceed from the impulse of the moment, and never from premeditated malice. He cannot resist expressing whatever comes into his mind; and the least shade of the ridiculous is seized by him at a glance, and portrayed by him with a facility and felicity that must encourage the propensity to ridicule, which is inherent in him."

Trelawny, who had early noticed his inclination to flippant and ill-considered utterance, was especially struck with its display at the time of the tragedy in the Bay of Spezzia, and sought to excuse it.

"Byron's idle talk," he said, "during the exhumation of Williams' remains did not proceed from want of feeling; but from his anxiety to conceal what he felt from others. When confined to his bed and racked by spasms which threatened his life, I have heard him talk in a much more unorthodox fashion the instant he could muster breath to banter. He had been taught, during his town-life, that any exhibition of sympathy and feeling was maudlin and unmanly, and that the appearance of daring and indifference denoted blood and high breeding."

It was this characteristic that had moved him to absent himself from his mother's funeral at Newstead, and as the coffin left the grounds, to turn from the door and call for his boxing gloves. It had caused him to leave Hunt and Trelawny at Shelley's funeral-pyre and swim three miles

out to his yacht in the Bay. He had a dread of people perceiving the emotions by which he was constantly tormented and torn.

Under the mask of idle talk, and behind the trivial jest or story, lay an unhappiness that his recent experiences had done much to aggravate, but which he was too proud to let men see. He was conscious of a decline in his literary reputation and of the growth of his personal unpopularity in England. The death of Allegra and the tragic fate of Shelley had moved him more than he was willing to acknowledge or to show. The failure of *The Liberal* depressed him. Mary Shelley's troubles got on his racked nerves. The difficulty with Hunt annoyed him. The Guiccioli bored him inexpressibly. The last cantos of *Donnie Johnnie*, who he informed Murray he intended should make the tour of Europe, go through the Divorce Court, and wind up as Anacharsis Clootz in the French Revolution, he felt had in some way fallen off from the freshness and spontaneity of their predecessors.

His memories and his conscience troubled him; and there was the gnawing dyspepsia that his "suicidal diet" had made chronic.

To unbosom himself to the benevolent Lady Blessington, who listened with eager ears and a pleased recognition of the literary value of his conversation, afforded him some relief. He said to her, soon after their meeting, with an intuitive perception of her sympathy, "When you know me better, you will find that I am the most selfish person in the world. I have, however, the merit, if it be one, of not only being perfectly conscious of my faults but of never denying them;



and this surely is something in this age of cant and hypocrisy."

He loved to condemn himself to beautiful women, and to bask in the warmth of their flattering contradictions.

He sought to escape from himself. There was a feminine side to him which many of his friends observed, and more than one of his biographers has emphasized; and his womanish vanity and craving to be listened to with admiration when he talked about himself was an anodyne to his sick and self-centered spirit.

But something in him of unappeasable restlessness told him that woman's tenderness and affection could never afford him any other relief than a transient one; and the idea of taking part in the liberation of Greece and of showing himself to the world a hero and protagonist for freedom was now much in his mind. He flattered his self-esteem with the thought that there was promise of a greater consolation in fighting, and perhaps dying in the cause of liberty than in continued dalliance in women's chambers to the lascivious pleatings of a lute. He complacently regarded himself as of heroic stature and dreamed of a place in history.

In vainglorious mood he told his new Countess that he had made as many sacrifices for freedom as most people of his age, and that the one he was about to make would probably be his last. The gloom of the Scot was always with him, and he said: "You will think me more superstitious than ever when I tell you that I have a presentiment that I shall die in Greece. I hope it may be in action, for that would be a good finish to a very *triste* existence, and I have a horror of death-bed scenes. But as I have not been famous

for my luck in life, most probably I shall not have more in the manner of my death, and I may draw my last sigh not on the field of glory but on the bed of disease."

His foreboding that he was to perish for freedom in Greece was persistent; but it never shook his courage.

In times of deepest depression his sardonic humor often delighted to assert itself. When he had been repeating to her one day some epigrams and lampoons, in which many of his friends were severely dealt with, she asked him in case he died and these proofs of friendship came before the public, what would be the feelings of those friends, who had indulged the pleasing illusion that they stood well in his good graces.

"That is precisely one of the ideas which most amuses me," he cynically replied. "I often fancy the rage and humiliation of my quondam friends at hearing the truth,—at least, from me,—for the first time, and when I am beyond the reach of their malice. Each individual will enjoy the sarcasms against his friends, but that will not console him for those against himself. Knowing the affectionate dispositions of my *soi-disant* friends, and the mortal chagrin my death would occasion them, I have written my thoughts of each, purely as a consolation for them in case they survive me."

His infinite jest not infrequently assumed a less malicious form, as illustrated in one of the stories he told her:

"Poor dear Madame de Staël," he said, with his mocking smile, "I shall never forget seeing her one day at table with a large party, when the busk (I believe you ladies call it) of her corset forced its way through the top of the corset,

and would not descend, though pushed by all the force of both hands of the wearer, who became crimson from the operation. After fruitless effort, she turned in despair to the *valet de chambre* behind her chair, and requested him to draw it out, which could only be done by his passing his hand from behind over her shoulder and across her chest, when with a desperate effort he unsheathed the busk. Had you seen the faces of some of the English ladies of the party," he concluded with glee, "you would have been, like me, almost convulsed; while Madame remained perfectly unconscious that she had committed any solecism on *la décence Anglaise*."

The Blessingtons left Genoa, after a visit of about two months, during which he sometimes talked to her of Teresa, who lived in his house. The Irish Countess never laid eyes on the blond Romagnese during her stay. La Guiccioli breathed a sigh of relief when Marguerite went; though the literary lady had not remained long enough to bore her self-revealing hero from whom she parted with admiration and compassion, while tears filled his eyes at the thought that he would never see her lovely face again.

## XXIV

### BELLYING SAILS

THE die was cast. The Greek Committee in London with seductive blandishments had appealed to his love of liberty, and had given him to understand what a tremendous power for good he would prove in the cause of the struggling Greeks against their Turkish masters. His fame was continental. His personal participation in the conflict would thrill Europe and kindle fresh courage in the occidental enemies of the unspeakable Turk. The Committee also knew that he had a lot of money.

They made him a member along with Colonel Stanhope. The appeal to his vanity, his pride, and his hatred of oppression determined his conclusion to yield to the romantic adventure which had long been lurking in his thought. And, moreover, he was awfully tired of Teresa.

In June, 1823, he wrote to Trelawny, who was in Florence dangling at Mary Shelley's petticoat-tails: "You must have heard that I am going to Greece. Why do you not come to me? I want your aid, and am exceedingly anxious to see you. Pray come, for I am at last determined to go to Greece; it is the only place I was ever contented in. I am serious, and did not write before, as I might have given you a journey for nothing; they all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they; but at all events, let us go."

The Buccaneer said of these earlier impulses of Byron, that "the undercurrent of his mind was always drifting towards the East. He envied the free and independent manner in which Lady Hester Stanhope lived in Syria, and often reverted to it. He said he would have gone there if she had not forestalled him."

He would play second fiddle to no woman, and since Lady Hester had preëmpted Syria, "his thoughts veered round to his early love—the Isles of Greece."

The Cornish adventurer cared not a proverbial tinker's dam for "liberty" or "causes." The only kind of freedom that stirred his wild blood was that of the unconfined sea-winds blowing through his long black hair, and the beat of the waves against his speeding ship when there was a prize or an enemy in the offing. But he was not averse to any sort of lark. He had only recently returned to Florence, from the tame adventure of a duck-shooting expedition in the marshes of the Maremma where he had contracted fever. After his recovery he had gone to Rome to look after the vaults in the English Cemetery for Shelley's ashes and for his own final resting-place. The lachrymose Mary, troubled about her future and eager to return to England, was gloomy company. He was ready to take a turn in Greece with the sword of a soldier of fortune and an eye for loot and the ladies.

There must have been some telepathic communication of minds between him and Byron, for they were writing to each other at the same moment, and their letters crossed. Trelawny's said that Mary Shelley had assured him of his Lordship's purpose and that his intention was fixed to go. He

would therefore like to accompany him, "whether on sea or shore."

He told him in this letter that he was thinking of visiting Leghorn to await definite information of his plans; and with the easy self-assurance that never failed him and a perfect confidence in his superior knowledge of everything pertaining to the sea, he offered to keep "a sharp lookout for vessels on sale."

Byron, however, without relying on Trelawny to find a ship, had already obtained a British brig, the *Hercules*, in which, after trying her out, they set sail from Genoa on the 16th of July, a week before Mary Shelley and her little boy started on their homeward journey in an opposite direction.

On the deck of the *Hercules*, under a blazing July sun as she went out of the harbor into the blue waters of the Mediterranean, the assembled adventurers watched the receding land—Byron, Trelawny, Teresa's brother Pietro, Dr. Francisco Bruno, "personal physician to Lord Byron"; the old and faithful Newstead servant, Fletcher, the Cornishman's negro groom, whom he had picked up at Leghorn, and various other attendants and servants. Two dogs gamboled about under the bellying sails, and there were five horses in the hold. Byron had been bothered about his three pet geese at the Casa Saluzzo; but though reluctant to part with the birds, to which he was much attached, he concluded to leave them behind as unnecessary and inconvenient appendages of his expeditionary party. His last words directed towards the fading shores of Italy was a shout to his banker, Charles Barry, to take care of his geese.

Trelawny wrote to Clare: "I have long contemplated this; but I was deterred by the fear that an unknown stranger, without money, etc., would be ill-received. I now go under better auspices. L. B. is one of the Greek Committee; he takes out arms, ammunition, money, and protection to them. When once there, I can shift for myself, and shall see what can be done."

When every preparation had been made, Byron was smitten with the irresolution that constantly succeeded whatever plan he had once determined on. It was so with his love affairs, as with his other enterprises. It had been the experience of his marriage, and of the episode with Clare. When introspection once got in its deadly work, his mind was filled with damning doubts, and apprehensions and forebodings, that grew into despair.

He once said to Lady Blessington: "My eyes can never open to the failing of undertakings passion prompts me to engage in until I am so far embarked that retreat (at least with honor) is impossible, and my *mal à propos sagesse* arrives to scare away the enthusiasm that led to the undertaking, and which is so requisite to carry it on."

The superstition which had become conviction that he would never leave Greece alive possessed him with morbid persistence. The second-sight of the North was constantly with him, and coming events cast their dark shadows before. He had beheld apparitions and wraiths since his early years; and when at Genoa, he would make Fletcher look under the big bed at the Casa Saluzzo, with its family motto surmounted by baronial coronets—the bed which the Blessington thought

"the most gaudy and vulgar thing she ever saw"—to assure him that there was nothing portentous there. He had heard Shelley tell of seeing a lady with eyes in her bosom, of a child imploring him from the sea, of the ghost of himself passing by the window; and he slept with his pistols in convenient reach, as though with them he could defend himself against the phantasms of his dread.

Fletcher thought that all the stories told him by Shelley had aroused and increased the superstition that was in his master's blood—the sense of omen that had constantly manifested itself in his lonely days at Newstead.

He had now got a bad case of nerves; but on the voyage he did not permit his companions to observe his depression. "I never was on shipboard with a better companion than Byron," wrote Trelawny in his *Recollections*. "He was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship. When appealed to, he always answered: 'Do as you like.'"

He spent much of his time apart from his companions, reading his books, of which he always carried a generous supply. They took his thoughts off himself in a way that the banal conversation of his incongruous fellow-adventurers could not do.

Trivial incidents interested him. It was a symptom of his mental condition. He was delighted when he succeeded in inducing the Cornishman to turn over to him the blackamoor of whom he had got possession at Leghorn. The grinning Ethiopian was a unique figure in his retinue of whites, and he felt a childish pride in his ownership and imagined



that the negro lent distinction to his train of followers. The Roman Emperors had been accompanied by African slaves. The gift to him from Trelawny of a green cavalry jacket, which the Cornishman bought from a tailor in Vienna, and which did not fit the purchaser, afforded him much pleasure. In reply to a query propounded to Fletcher of what coat he had to land with in Greece, his servant told him that he possessed no other jacket than his old Gordon plaid one. He tried on Trelawny's green garment, that proved a perfect fit, and he wore the jacket constantly at Missolonghi, though he did not land there in it, having obtained something more gorgeous.

He sought to vary the monotony of the voyage with boxing and fencing, and he played with the two dogs on the deck; and occasionally he shot at the sea-gulls. He invoked every device to drive off the blue devils; and he was not averse to participating with the Buccaneer in a practical joke on Captain Grant, the cockney-tongued master of the vessel.

Trelawny, with graphic pen and unique powers of narration, gives an account of the episode. "On great occasions," he says, "when our Captain wished to be grand, he wore a bright scarlet waistcoat. As he was very corpulent, Byron wished to see if this vest would not button round us both. The Captain was taking his siesta one day, when Byron persuaded the boy to bring up the waistcoat. In the meantime, as it was nearly calm and very hot, I opened the coops of the geese and ducks, who instinctively took to the water. Neptune, the Newfoundland dog, jumped after them, and Moretto, the bull dog, followed.

"'Now,' said Byron, standing on the gangway, with one

arm in the red waistcoat, 'put your arm in, Tre. We will jump overboard, and take the shine out of it.'

"So we did.

"The Captain, hearing the row on deck, came up, and when he saw the gorgeous garment he was so proud of defiled by sea-water, he roared out: 'My Lord, you should know better than to make a mutiny on shipboard' (the crew were laughing at the fun). 'I won't heave to, or lower a boat; I hope you will both be drowned.'

"Then you will lose your *frite*' (for so the Captain always pronounced the word 'freight'), shouted Byron.

"As I saw the dogs worrying the ducks and geese, I returned on board with the waistcoat, pacified the skipper, lowered a boat, and with the aid of a boy sculled after the birds and beasts; the Newfoundland brought them to us unharmed; but Moretto, the bulldog, did not mouth them so tenderly."

By degrees Byron overcame his aloofness and self-absorption. "His sadness," says the Cornishman, "intermitted, and his cold fits alternated with hot ones."

But the dark Scottish second-sight did not leave him in the midst of his gayest moods; and in a somber one, when the spell was strongest, he said to Trelawny: "If Death comes in the shape of a cannon-ball and takes off my head, he is welcome. I have no wish to live; but I can't bear pain. Mind you, Trelawny, don't repeat the ceremony you went through with Shelley—no one wants my ashes."

"You will be claimed for Westminster Abbey," Trelawny replied.

"No," said Byron, "they don't want me, nor would I have my bones mingled with that motley throng. There is a rocky

islet off Maina—it is the Pirate's Isle; it suggested *The Corsair*. No one knows it; I'll show it to you on the way to the Morea. There is the spot I should like my bones to lie."

"They won't let me do it," replied Trelawny, "without you will it."

"I will do so," replied Byron. "If you are with me when I die remind me, and don't let the blundering blockhead doctors bleed me, or when I am dead maul my carcase—I have an antipathy to letting blood."

Sick in mind and body, but possessed of an unconquerable will and a new purpose to make his anticipated exit from the world a nobler thing than his life in it had been, he confronted what lay before him with a courage that was heroic.

## XXV

### ISLES OF GREECE

**I**N the first week in August they put into the harbor of Argostoli, a town of Cephallonia, one of the largest of the Ionian islands. However unpleasant the premonitions of his approaching fate, Byron felt some comfort in escaping the worries and troubles that he had left behind in Italy; and by no means the least of these was his clinging vine, Teresa. She had tired him until she became a nightmare; but he considered his long relations with her, and left her with as little friction as possible. It was a not infrequent habit with him to part from his lady-loves, when he had grown weary of them, very pleasantly and smoothly as though seeking to assuage the bitterness of separation with kindly memories and illusive hopes. With all his faults, he was not incapable of tenderness.

He and Teresa had said "good-by," in an amicable separation that bore no resemblance to one that was expected to be permanent. She was worthy of his consideration, too, because her charming and enthusiastic and blundering young brother, Count Pietro Gamba, was a companion of this last adventuring; and, it may be said to Pietro's credit, he stuck to his friend to the tragic end.

Byron had a morbid conscience always; and his often unrestrained self-indulgences gave it abundant material to

work on. Though he was so pleased to escape from La Contessa, he felt that he ought to write to her. The letter he sent at last was a very different one from the passionate declaration of devotion that he had inscribed in her copy of *Corinne* at Bologna, which has been his sole love-message to her in English. Now he wrote again in the cold language of the land of his nativity. The fires of that earlier flame had sunk down into ashes as gray as those in Shelley's grave.

"Pietro has told you," ran his first letter from Cephallonia, "all the gossip of the island—our earthquakes, our politics, and present abode in a pretty village. As his opinions and mine on the Greeks are nearly similar, I need say little on that subject. I was a fool to come here; but being here, I must see what is to be done."

"This," he had said to Lady Blessington, referring to his proposed journey to Greece, "is one of the many scrapes into which my poetical temperament has drawn me. You smile, but it is nevertheless true. No man, or woman either, with such a temperament, can be quiet. . . . I am fairly in for it, and it is useless to repine; but I repeat, this scrape, which may be my last, has been caused by my poetical temperament—the devil take it, say I."

He thought that the Greek Committee in London had made a tool of him. "They think I must go on," he told Trelawny. "They are deceived; I won't budge a foot farther until I see my way. We will stay here."

He was encouraged in his reception by the people of the town; and when he heard from Marco Bozzaris, the Suliot chieftain, in a message clamoring for him to

come into "this part of Greece," where Bozzaris was holding back the Turkish advance on Anatolikon, he was flattered.

It was Bozzaris' last letter. He was killed in battle a few hours after signing it. Mavrocordato, the other Greek chieftain, to whom Byron had been recommended, who called himself Prince and was Trelawny's pet abomination, was a fugitive.

Having at this time many qualms about the Greek business, with its lack of organization, its jealous and discordant chieftains and its semi-barbaric factions, Byron not only made no preparation to proceed to the mainland where the desultory fighting was going on, but remained on the *Hercules* in Argostoli harbor for a month after his arrival at Cephalonia.

He wrote Teresa one or two later letters that were prosaic and conventional, with the love-element lacking. In one of them, for want of something more entertaining to say to the deserted lady, he expressed the hope that "the Spanish cause" would be "arranged," as he thought it might "have an influence on the Greek contest."

"The Spanish cause" had apparently given him no earlier or greater concern than it now gave Teresa. His love of liberty had seemingly never interested him in the slightest degree in the struggle going on in Spain.

"I wish that both," he wrote his Countess at Genoa, "were fairly and favorably settled, that I might return to Italy and talk over with you *our*, or rather Pietro's, adventures, some of which are rather amusing, as also some of the incidents of our voyages and travels. But I reserve them in the

hope that we may laugh over them together at no very distant period."

Sometimes, when Pietro wrote to his sister, he would mention to Byron the fact of his writing. Byron would himself occasionally insert something in the letters, rather to please the young man than for any other purpose. Gamba sedulously did what he could to keep his absent sister in her lover's memory.

After a month's stay on shipboard in the harbor, Byron paid off the vessel and took a house at Metaxata, a village about four and a half miles from Argostoli, to which Pietro and his "personal physician," Dr. Bruno, accompanied him.

At Metaxata, as in Italy, during the time he remained there, until his final journey to Missolonghi on December 28th, nearly five months after his arrival, he led, with occasional variations, a similar life to that which Trelawny tells of his living in Italy.

"So far as I could learn from Fletcher, his yeoman bold," writes the Cornishman, "and he had been with him from the time of his first leaving England—Byron, wherever he was, so far as it was practicable pursued the same lazy, dawdling habits he continued during the time I knew him. He was seldom out of his bed before noon, when he drank a cup of very strong green tea, without sugar or milk. At two he ate a biscuit and drank soda water. At three he mounted his horse and sauntered along the road—and generally the same road—if alone, racking his brains for fitting matter and rhymes for the coming poem. He dined at seven as frugally as anchorites are said in story-books to have done; at nine he visited the family of Count Gamba; on his return

home, he sat reading and composing until two or three o'clock in the morning, and then to bed, often feverish, restless and exhausted—to dream, as he said, more than to sleep.”

He wrote only one poem, his last, while in Greece. This was the verses composed on his thirty-sixth birthday, filled with martial ardor and enthusiasm, but indicative of his foreboding. Its last stanza was:

“Seek out—less often sought than found—  
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;  
Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
And take thy rest.”

He said to one of his attendants at the time: “I shall never go back from Greece—either the Turks, or the Greeks, or the climate will prevent that.”

An Englishman, traveling through Cephallonia, describes him as he saw him then.

“He looked like a man under sentence of death, or returning from the funeral of all that he held dear on earth. His person seemed shrunk, his face was pale, and his eyes languid and fixed on the ground. He was leaning upon a stick, and had changed his dark camlet-caped surtout of the preceding evening for a nankeen jacket embroidered like a hussar's—an attempt at dandyism or dash, to which the look and demeanor of the wearer formed a sad contrast.”

But as the days went by he plucked up a semblance of his normal bearing and renewed his spirit. He made a habit of carrying many of his books with him from place to place, and among them none afforded him more pleasure than the *Waverley* novels, then appearing at not infrequent intervals.



An English resident of the island had just received a copy of *Quentin Durward*, and lent it to him when he learned that he had not read it. He seized the book, went at once to his apartment in which he shut himself up, refused to eat any dinner, and "merely came out once or twice to say how much he was entertained, returning to his room with a plate of figs in his hand."

The Wizard of the North had long since laid his witching spell on him; and Sir Walter, of whom, with his penchant for nicknames, he was in the habit of affectionately speaking as "Watty," tells an odd story about him in his *Demonology and Witchcraft*: "Not long after the death of a late illustrious poet, who had filled, while living, a great station in the eye of the public, a literary friend, to whom the deceased had been well known, was engaged during the darkening twilight of an autumn evening, in perusing one of the publications which professed to detail the habits and opinions of the distinguished individual who was now no more. As the reader had enjoyed the intimacy of the deceased to a considerable degree, he was deeply interested in the publication which contained some particulars relating to himself and other friends. A visitor was sitting in the apartment, who was also engaged in reading. Their sitting-room opened into an entrance-hall, rather fantastically fitted up with articles of armor, skins of wild animals and the like. It was when laying down his book and passing into this hall, through which the moon was beginning to shine, that the individual of whom I speak saw right before him and in a standing posture the exact representation of his departed friend, whose recollection had been so strongly brought to his imagination.

He stopped for a single moment, so as to notice the wonderful accuracy with which fancy had impressed upon the bodily eye the peculiarities of dress and posture of the illustrious poet. Sensible, however, of the delusion, he felt no sentiment save that of wonder at the extraordinary accuracy of the resemblance, and stepped onwards towards the figure, which resolved itself as he approached into the various materials of which it was composed. These were merely a screen, occupied by great-coats, shawls, plaids and such other articles as usually are found in a country entrance-hall."

Byron's life at Metaxata, in its withdrawal from the anxious harassments that had beset his later time in Italy, afforded him a temporary sense of rest and of freedom. With the proneness to give way to his appetites, he forgot his "suicidal diet" and ate fresh-gathered grapes, in preference to ripe figs and nectarines,—ostensibly "in order to accustom myself to any and all things that a man may be compelled to take where I am going."

Forbidden fruit of whatever kind was irresistible to him; and now he laughed at the idea of inhibition. He forsook his regimen of abstention from alcoholic liquors. He "drank twice in one afternoon of 'gin-swizzle,' and then of various Greek wines." The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak; and, when, after all his years of dietetic self-denial during which he usually ate alone, tempting viands and drinks were set before him, he simply could not stand the pressure. Here lay the secret of his life. He had the ability and the courage to withstand temptation when he strongly willed it, but the physical opportunity of yielding to his appetites at times became over-seductive. He was very human.

After he had drunk the "gin-swizzles" he told the inexpressible Dr. Bruno, who "wring his hands and tore his hair with alarm and vexation," that he had eaten heavily at a luxurious dinner given by the English consul in his honor, because he "could not abstain."

Following the "gin-swizzles" and the tempting dinner, Dr. Bruno perceived that his patient "had violent spasms," and that "his brain was excited to dangerous excess."

His nervous system had become disorganized, and his conduct in consequence was such as to cause his companions grave anxiety. He visited with Trelawny and others the adjacent island of Ithaca, spending several days there. On returning to Cephallonia he passed the night at a monastery, where the Abbot received him with pompous ceremonies in a great hall illuminated for the occasion, and delivered an address "in a polyglot of many tongues" to his bored visitor.

"Byron," says the Cornishman, "had not spoken a word from the time we entered the monastery. I thought he was resolved to set us an example of proper behavior. No one was more surprised than I was when suddenly he burst into a paroxysm of rage, and vented his ire in a torrent of Italian execrations on the holy Abbot and all his brotherhood. Then turning to us with flashing eyes, he vehemently exclaimed:

"'Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? They drive me mad!'

"Seizing a lamp, he left the room.

"The consternation of the monks at this explosion of wrath may be imagined. The amazed Abbot remained for some time motionless, his eyes and mouth wide open. Holding

the paper he had been reading in the same position, he looked at the vacant place left by Byron, and then at the door through which he had disappeared. At last he thought that he had solved the mystery, and in a low, tremulous voice said, significantly putting his finger to his forehead:

“*‘Eccolo, è matto poveretto!’*”

## XXVI

### THE SUNSET OF LIFE

THE astonished Abbot would have been confirmed in his opinion that the poor fellow was mad if he could have witnessed his visitor's subsequent behavior. That night Byron was seized with violent cramps of the stomach; and Trelawny, going to his room, returned saying that it would take "ten such as he to hold his Lordship for a minute." He added that he was smashing everything to pieces in the apartment. Little Dr. Bruno, in fear and trembling, requested a member of the party to go to him and induce him to "take this one pill and he will be safe." Bruno, who stood in mortal terror of him in his quietest moments, was himself afraid to venture.

The door of the room where the excited invalid was engaged in the pastime of breaking the furniture had no lock; but, when tried, was found to be barricaded with chairs and a table. On effecting an entrance, Dr. Bruno's emissary beheld Byron, half-undressed, standing in a far corner like a hunted beast at bay.

"Back! Out of my sight!" he shouted. "Fiends! Can I have no peace, no relief from this hell?" and he flung a chair at the intruder's head.

Later, another member of the party succeeded in persuading him to take Dr. Bruno's pills, which it may be surmised

contained opium; and the next morning the party set out on their return to Metaxata, with Byron deeply dejected in the early stages of the journey, but by nightfall riding ahead in renewed good humor, shouting and singing at the pitch of his voice songs which he had learned from his "piano-poet" friend, Tommy Moore, in England years before.

Any ordinary learned member of the faculty, witnessing these performances without previous knowledge of the case, might reasonably have diagnosed his condition as one of *mania a potu*. But the diagnosis would have been both erroneous and unjust. Beyond it lay a lifetime of experiences that had borne the bitter fruit which was now ripening to its fullness and its fall; and in the background of those experiences lowered the baleful inheritances of lawlessness and violence that had been the atavistic gift of his Scots kinsmen and ancestry.

Self-imposed starvation followed by immoderate indulgences; dyspepsia; neurasthenia; uncertainty of mind; the stings of conscience; a restless and uneasy compulsion to activity; a predilection to delay—all these racked him beyond self-control.

In a bad temper he had a row with Pietro Gamba about misunderstanding an order for red cloth from Cephallonia. He accused Gamba of mismanagement of his accounts, and for some time would not forgive him. It was an illustration of such a coincidence of Gight anger and Scottish thrift as had caused his mother to die in a fit of rage.

In his imaginative brain were memories of a lonely and desolate youth; of a bad-tempered mother; of humiliating boyish fatness; of the terrible curse of his lame leg; of his

sudden and unexpected elevation from poverty and obscurity to an English peerage. His inheritance of great estates; the demoralizing flattery that had grown up about his poetry; his petting and spoiling by foolish women of high and low degree;—his unfortunate marriage and separation; the tragic and disturbing love affair with Clare Clairmont—all these pursued and haunted him. Thoughts of his forbidden daughter, Ada; memories of the little dead Allegra, and of the Church's insult to him in her sepulture; contemplation of the hatred on the part of his own caste in England; his exile from his native land—these galled his proud spirit. Then, too, there were his conscience and his introspection; his wavering and uncertain feelings about coming to Greece; his loss of faith in his friends; his morbid feeling of great intellectual powers wasted; his vanity; his self-indulgence; his realization of a misspent life; and last but by no means least, the distressing regimen through many years of his destructive diet. He had been his own worst enemy; but he had had many adversities with which to contend; and his mental malady was born of these things.

Still continuing at the villa in Cephallonia, he put from him on one pretext or another the performance of the purpose for which he had come. His heart was not in this business of freeing Greece. He was seeking to escape from himself. He was constitutionally a procrastinator and a lingerer. He used to say that if he stayed six days at a place, it took him six months to get out of it. But the indomitable will-power was unquenched; and he felt that he was predestined to go on. The Calvinistic teaching of Mary Gray was ineluctable.

The restless and adventurous Trelawny, who did not care a fourpence ha' penny for the liberties of all the Mediterranean countries but wanted to be where there were dangerous deeds in sight and where life was in a glow, became terribly worn-out with the dilly-dallying at Cephallonia. He persuaded his chief to send him and another of the associate adventurers to Tripolitza in the Morea, on the ostensible mission of ascertaining and reporting back the real state of affairs there and of endeavoring to reconcile the petty enmities and jealousies of the rival Greek leaders who, under the guise of achieving the liberty of their country, were each seeking to cut the others' throats.

Before Trelawny left, he and Byron were accustomed to bathe together in the harbor in the evenings, and afterwards to eat supper in an olive grove on the shore. On one of these occasions the poet stretched out his right leg towards the Cornishman, and said: "I hope this accursed limb will be knocked off in the war."

"It won't improve your swimming," Trelawny replied. "I will exchange legs if you will give me a portion of your brains."

"You would repent your bargain," said Byron. "At times I feel my brains boiling, as Shelley's did while you were grilling him."

Once, when he was enjoying his daily siesta, Trelawny suddenly called him, first in a low tone and then more loudly. He awoke in terror, and said, "I have had such a dream! I am trembling with fear. I am not fit to go to Greece."

The Cornishman, impulsive and impatient, was glad to leave him and to get out on his mission to the Morea.



While awaiting the return of his emissaries, and still deferring the day of his departure, Byron discussed Christianity and religion with Dr. Kennedy, a member of the medical department of the army, who was then stationed on the island. He told the boresome and proselyting doctor that he did not fail to read his Bible from time to time. "Though not perhaps as much as I should," he politely conceded.

"Have you begun to pray that you may understand it?" queried Kennedy.

"Not yet," he replied. "I have not arrived at that pitch of faith yet; but it may come by and bye. You are in too great a hurry."

During one of these religious conversations an English friend came in on a visit. Upon his entrance the tedious doctor arose and departed.

"You have saved my life," Byron exclaimed to his welcome visitor. "Saint Kennedy was boring me to distraction, and but for your arrival I never could have got rid of him."

The good doctor thought that the poet, who bore his inquisitions with patience and replied to his questions with urbanity, appeared to be unhappy:—"not merely because he was not virtuous but because he was not religious."

In December, after months of delay at Metaxata, when the calls from Missolonghi, then blockaded by the Turks, became urgent and importunate, he pulled himself together and went to the neighboring island of Zante. Thence he sailed for the mainland.

One of his reasons for lingering in Cephallonia was that he did not wish to engage in the war until the Greek chieftains

should settle their differences. It was a reasonable conclusion. Bozzaris was now dead; and Mavrocordato, of whom Trelawny made fun as a bogus prince and humbug, was at Missolonghi with Colonel Stanhope clamoring for Byron to hasten.

"A great deal is expected of you, both in the way of counsel and of money," wrote Stanhope. "Your further delay will be attended with serious consequences."

Byron had sold late in 1823 his Rochedale estate for £34,000, and now had the money; and the Greek loan had not yet been floated in London. It was highly important that he should come at once. Colonel Stanhope, later the fifth Earl of Harrington, deputed by the Greek Committee in London, had been at Cephallonia, and had preceded him to Missolonghi with an empty purse. They were in great need of funds.

In spite of his pose, proclaimed to Lady Blessington and to others, of having grown niggardly and parsimonious, his charities had always been frequent and generous. He told her that money was "wisdom, knowledge and power all combined"; and that this conviction was the only one he had "in common with all his countrymen."

But once started on his expenditures for Greece, he spent his fortune with the lavish liberality of a drunken sailor. He had brought with him from Italy ten thousand Spanish dollars in cash, with bills of exchange for forty thousand more, and he now advanced to "the Greek government" £4000,—the first of the large sums he expended in its behalf. At the same time, he was writing doubtfully to Colonel Napier: "I can hardly be disappointed, for I believed myself

on a fool's errand from the outset. But I like the Cause at least, and will stick to it."

One thing that especially worried him was that the Greeks were "such damned liars."

Clare Clairmont, with the cynicism that not infrequently is born of bitter experience, told William Graham in Florence: "He simply invested a great deal of money in the Greek cause with the idea of being made a King, which, as Trelawny says, he undoubtedly would have been if he had lived, notwithstanding his stern republicanism."

The grandiose and spectacular were always in his dreams; and that he looked forward to becoming King of Greece is not improbable. He had little patience with Stanhope's democratic idea that the garlic-breathed Greeks were fit to govern themselves. "Every corner of the Peninsula," says the Scottish author of the *History of the Greek Revolution*, "was torn to pieces by obscure civil contests."

On his way from Zante to Missolonghi, when off Cape Scropha, at the entrance to the Gulf of Patras, he wrote Stanhope a characteristic letter.

"Scrofu, or some such name,  
"On board a Cephalloniate Mistico.

"Dec. 31, 1823.

"My dear Stanhope:

"We are just arrived here—that is, part of my people and I, with some things, etc., and which it may be as well not to specify in a letter (which has a risk of being intercepted, perhaps); but Gamba and my horses, negro, steward, and the press, and all the committee things, also some eight thou-

sand dollars of mine (but never mind, we have more left—do you understand?) are taken by the Turkish frigates; and my party and myself, in another boat, have had a narrow escape last night (being close under their stern and hailed, but we would not answer and bore away) as well this morning. Here we are with sun and charming weather, within a pretty little port enough; but whether our Turkish friends may not send in their boats and take us out (we have no arms, except two carbines and some pistols, and I suspect not more than four fighting people on board), is another question; especially if we remain long here, since we are blocked out of Missolonghi by the direct entrance. You had better send my friend, George Drake, and a body of Suliotes, to escort us by land or by the canals, with all convenient speed. Gamba and our Bombard are taken into Patmos, I suppose, and we must take a turn at the Turks to get them out. But where the devil is the fleet gone? The Greek, I mean—leaving us to get in without the least intimation to take heed that the Moslems were out again.

“Make my respects to Mavrocordato, and say that I am here at his disposal. I am uneasy at being here. We are very well.

“Yours, etc.

“N. B.

“P. S. The Bombard was twelve miles out when taken, at least so it appeared to us (if taken she actually be, for it is not certain), and we had to escape from another vessel that stood right in between us and the port.”

Since his inheritance after the death of Lady Noel in 1822 of the large property that then came to him by right

of his wife, who got one-half of it under the Articles of Separation, he had taken the name of Noel Byron. It pleased him to sign his letters N. B. They were the initials of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Gamba and his bombard had in reality been captured and turned over to the Turkish commander at Patras. Accusing the Ottoman captain of the vessel of a breach of neutrality, he threatened him with the vengeance of the British government for seizing a ship sailing under its colors. This threat, and the further curious fact that the master of the Turkish vessel recognized in the Italian Count a man who had saved his life some years before in the Black Sea, resulted in the release of the bombard and its crew.

## XXVII

### HAIL AND FAREWELL!

**B**YRON's arrival at Missolonghi was distinguished by the grandiose theatricals in which he rejoiced. Clare Clairmont, with keen understanding of his most intimate foibles, said of him truthfully and without malice that he "was always playing to the galleries." The incense burnt before the altar of his poetic fame had lost its sweet savor in his nostrils. The paltry jargon of the literary mart was forgotten in his high moment of warlike anticipation. He was stirred by memories of fighting forbears who had died in battle. Byrons and Gordons had alike been warriors. He had come to reclaim a famous land "from the dull yoke of its barbaric foes."

Surrounded by the escorting vessels of the Greek fleet, he arrived at his destination arrayed in a splendid scarlet uniform that he had borrowed for the occasion; and he landed amid the wild shouts and savage yells of the assembled populace and the salvos of cannon and discharge of Suliote musketry. Thrilled by the noisy acclamations of the mob that hailed him as the savior of Greece, he went to the house that had been allotted to him, where he was enthusiastically received by Prince Mavrocordato and Colonel Stanhope and a gaping assemblage of Greek officers.

The lethargy that had characterized his long stay at Cephal-

lonia had now vanished. His will-power was dominant. He was full of fire and energy and determination. The liberation of Greece had become an exclusive passion, and he was ready to lay down his life for it in the fulfillment of his doom.

"Hope and content were pictured in his countenance," writes the admiring Pietro Gamba, who witnessed his reception. "He was in excellent health, and appeared moved by the scene."

In the three-storied dwelling, situated near a stagnant, fever-breeding ditch, Colonel Stanhope had already taken up his quarters on the ground floor. Byron occupied the apartments above, where he bestowed his belongings, arranging his collection of weapons and his books on the walls of his poorly furnished sitting-room and making as comfortable as possible the bare and uninviting chamber in which he slept. In these cramped quarters, at stated hours, the reasons for which the untrained Greeks and Anatolians could never be brought to understand, he received from time to time the importunate and noisy delegations and individuals that constantly crowded the house with demands and greedy beseechings for every conceivable gift.

In spite of the innumerable worries and annoyances that continued to beset him from the time of his arrival, a new life had come to him. He threw off his natural indolence, and bestirred himself in efforts that gave promise of distinguished achievement. He exhibited remarkable business capacity and energy, and was industrious in his attention to all the details of his military duties. He worked night and day with the dogged industry and persistence of a bank clerk.

He paid off the fleet, and took into his personal service five hundred of the turbulent and mercenary Albanian Suliotes—"Zodiacs," Captain Grant of the *Hercules* dubbed them—who had fought with Marco Bozzaris. "He burns with military ardor and chivalry," said Colonel Stanhope exultingly, "and will proceed with the expedition to Lepanto."

But the expedition was delayed by the mutinous conduct of the "Zodiacs," who regarded him at once as a Cræsus and an easy mark. They swore by all the Albanian gods, which as Christians they affected to despise, that they would not stir until their arrears were paid in full. They became riotous and obstreperous, crowding into the house and noisily exploiting themselves in its vicinity. In the tumult and confusion going on outside, he became again nervous and irritable and showed his temper in a dispute with Colonel Stanhope over that worthy's hobby of establishing a "Greek press," the product of which Byron knew the Greeks could not read, and would not, if they could.

He could stand no teasing himself, but delighted in teasing others. He was one evening joking Stanhope about "the press," when the nettled Colonel asserted that Byron, "after professing liberal principles from boyhood had when called upon to act, proved himself a Turk," because he wished "to crush the press," and had "generally abused liberal principles."

"I am a mere soldier," exclaimed the irritated Stanhope, who advocated a republican form of government for Greece, which Byron sensibly regarded as absurd. "Our principles are diametrically opposite, so let us abandon the subject.



If Lord Byron acts up to his professions, he will be the greatest, if not the meanest, of mankind."

"My character, I hope, does not depend on your assertions," retorted his Lordship.

"No; your genius has immortalized you," said the soldier; "the worst will not deprive you of fame."

"Well, you shall see," replied Byron; "judge me by my acts."

As he said "Good night!" and started to leave the room, Stanhope took up the light to conduct him to the passage.

"What! hold up a light to a Turk!" exclaimed the mocking Byron, as he hurried away.

Three days after this episode he was officially put in command of three thousand men, intended for the attack on Lepanto. For various reasons the expedition was delayed; and it was six weeks after his arrival at Missolonghi before it was determined to send an advance force of three hundred soldiers under the command of Gamba, whom Byron was to follow with the main body. The intractable Suliotes continued to give trouble, importunately demanding fresh contributions of money and provisions. On the day following that on which the plan had been made to forward Gamba's troops, Byron was attacked with nervous convulsions.

"I conceived," says Colonel Stanhope, "that this fit was occasioned by over-excitement. The mind of Byron is like a volcano; it is full of fire, wrath and combustibles, and when this matter comes to be strongly agitated, the explosion is dreadful. With respect to the causes which provoked this excess of feeling, they are beyond my reach except one great cause, the provoking conduct of the Suliotes."

These lawless mercenaries now absolutely refused the service against Lepanto, saying that they "would not fight against stone walls."

The apparent results of the nervous fit on his health were not immediately alarming; but his constitution had received a terrific shock. It was the beginning of the end. He began to complain of vertigo, though he continued to ride horseback and to go out in a boat on the water.

On one of these excursions he was caught in a heavy rain, and after a horseback ride of three miles he dismounted and returned in an open boat while the rain was still pouring. When he got home he was attacked by shooting pains in the back and limbs.

The next day he rode out again, and after his return had a chill which he attributed to his saddle having become wet in the downpour of the day before. The superstitious sense of impending doom returned to him, and he spoke of the old warning of a gypsy in England years before, who had bid him beware of his thirty-seventh year. He became ill, and the doctors who were with him persuaded him to consent to being bled. The fever which had seized him grew more violent, and his forebodings more persistent. A fearful hurricane of wind and rain arose, and the physicians, who had planned to remove him to Zante where the climate was better and more efficient medical treatment could be obtained, were forced to abandon the journey. The African sirocco continued for two or three days, while the sick man lay on his bed and listened to the wind howling and the rain beating against the windows.

He imagined that he was under the influence of the evil

eye, and sent one of his companions out to find a witch who could exorcise the spell. As his illness continued and he grew worse, the doctors observed with alarm the twitching of his fingers in his troubled sleep, and wanted to bleed him again. He persistently refused their importunities. They finally told him that unless it were done his cerebral and nervous system might become so affected as to deprive him of reason.

He held out his arm at this, and said: "Carve: you are, I see, a damned set of butchers; take away as much blood as you will, but have done with it!"

As he lay with closed eyes he heard one of them say something about epilepsy. He became at once deeply depressed, and from this depression he never recovered. He had confused thoughts of the Scottish superstition about the skulls, and Trelawny had prevented him from ever drinking from Shelley's.

Two other bleedings followed; and he was seized with delirium. The administration of stimulants was followed by indications of collapse. For twenty-four hours he lay in a state of lethargy, resembling coma. At six o'clock in the evening of the tenth day after the boat ride in the rain, he passed away, with incoherent mutterings about "Augusta—Ada—Kinnaird—Hobhouse."

Sir William Osler said in 1910 that in his opinion Byron's death was due to meningitis, and that nothing could have saved him.

Mary Shelley wrote to Trelawny on the 28th of July, 1824, that about a fortnight before she had gone to the house in London where Byron's body lay, and had seen Fletcher

there. "It would seem," she said, "from a few words he imprudently let fall, that his Lord spoke of Clare in his last moments and of his wish to do something for her, at a time when his mind, vacillating between consciousness and delirium, would not permit him to do anything."

Four or five days after his death, Trelawny, who had not seen him alive since he left him in Cephallonia in the preceding September, came to Missolonghi from Athens, whither he had gone after visiting the Morea.

"I waded through the streets," he says in his graphic account of this visit, "between wind and water to the house he had lived in. It was detached, and on the margin of the shallow, slimy sea-waters. For three months this house had been besieged, day and night, like a bank that has a run upon it. Now that death had closed the door, it was as silent as a cemetery. No one was in the house but Fletcher, of which I was glad. As if he knew my wishes, he led me up a narrow stair into a small room, with nothing in it but a coffin standing on tressels. No word was spoken by either of us; he withdrew the black pall and the white shroud, and there lay the embalmed body of the Pilgrim—more beautiful in death than in life. The contraction of the muscles and skin had effaced every line that time or passion had ever traced on it; few marble busts could have matched its stainless white, the harmony of its proportions and perfect finish; yet he had been dissatisfied with that body, and longed to cast its slough. How often had I heard him curse it! He was jealous of the genius of Shakespeare—that might well be—but where had he seen the face or form worthy to excite his envy?

"I asked Fletcher to bring me a glass of water. On his leaving the room, to confirm or remove my doubts as to the cause of his lameness I uncovered the Pilgrim's feet—and was answered—the great mystery was solved. Both his feet were clubbed and his legs withered to the knee;—the form and features of an Apollo, with the feet and legs of a sylvan satyr. This was a curse, chaining a proud and soaring spirit like his to the dull earth. In the drama of *The Deformed Transformed* I knew that he had expressed all he could express of what a man of highly wrought mind might feel when brooding over a deformity of body; but when he said: 'I have done the best which spirit may to make its way with all deformity's dull, deadly, discouraging weight upon me,' I thought it exaggerated as applied to himself. Now I saw it was not so. His deformity was always uppermost in his thoughts, and influenced every act of his life; spurred him on to poetry, as that was one of the few paths to fame open to him; and, as if to be revenged on Nature for sending him into the world 'scarce half made up' he scoffed at her works and traditions with the pride of Lucifer. This morbid feeling ultimately goaded him on to his last quixotic crusade in Greece.

"Knowing and sympathising with Byron's sensitiveness, his associates avoided prying into his lameness; so did strangers, from good breeding or common humanity. It was generally thought his halting gait originated in some defect of the right foot or ankle; the right foot was the most distorted, and it had been made worse in his boyhood by vain efforts to set it right. He told me that for several years

he wore steel splints which so wrenched the sinews and tendons of his leg that they increased his lameness. The foot was twisted inwards, only the edge touched the ground, and that leg was shorter than the other. His shoes were peculiar—very high-heeled, with the soles uncommonly thick on the inside, and pared thin on the outside; the toes were stuffed with cotton-wool; and his trousers were very large below the knee, and strapped down so as to cover his feet. The peculiarity of his gait was accounted for. He entered a room with a sort of run as if he could not stop; then planted his best leg well forward, throwing back his body to keep his balance. In early life, while his frame was light and elastic, with the aid of a stick he might have tottered along for a mile or two; but after he had weighed heavier he seldom attempted to walk more than a few hundred yards without squatting down or leaning against the first wall, bank, rock or tree at hand; never sitting on the ground, as it would have been difficult for him to get up again. In the company of strangers, occasionally, he would make desperate efforts to conceal his infirmity; but the hectic flush on his face, his swelling veins and quivering nerves betrayed him, and he suffered for many days after such exertions. Disposed to fatten, incapable of taking exercise to check the tendency, what could he do? If he added to his weight, his feet would not have supported him. In this dilemma he was compelled to exist in a state of semi-starvation; he was less than eleven stone when at Genoa, and said he had been fourteen at Venice. The pangs of hunger, which travellers and shipwrecked mariners have described, were nothing to what he suffered. Their privations were temporary; his were for life, and more

unendurable, as he was in the midst of abundance. I was exclaiming ‘Poor fellow! if your errors were greater than those of ordinary men, so were your temptations and provocations,’ when Fletcher returned with a bottle and glass, saying ‘There is nothing but slimy salt-water in this horrid place, so I have been half over the town to beg this bottle of porter,’ and answering my ejaculation of ‘poor fellow!’ he said:

“‘You may well say so, Sir. These savages are worse than any highwaymen; they have robbed my Lord of all his money and his life too.’

“Whilst saying this, Fletcher, without making any remark, drew the shroud and pall carefully over the feet of his master’s corpse. He was very nervous, and trembled as he did it—so strongly had his weak and superstitious nature been acted upon by the injunctions and threats of his master that, alive or dead, no one was to see his feet, for if they did he would haunt him.

“Fletcher gave me a sheet of paper, and from his dictation I wrote on Byron’s coffin the particulars of his last illness and death.”

## XXVIII

### THE LAST PILGRIMAGE

**T**HEY placed his body in a packing case, which was painted black for the solemn funeral ceremonies that were held at Missolonghi, and deposited it in a large receptacle containing spirits. Two weeks later it was shipped to Zante, where it remained while his friends and associates wrangled. Trelawny and Stanhope wanted to take him to Athens for burial, either in the Theseum or in the Acropolis. Another opposed this, saying that the Turks, should they recapture the city, would desecrate his tomb; and yet another urged that it should be temporarily interred at Zante until Lady Byron could be consulted as to its disposition. After a controversy, that finally became a heated quarrel, it was determined to send the body at once to England.

An English ship had come into Zante with the first instalment of the Greek loan, and on it Dr. Bruno, Stanhope, Fletcher, two more of Byron's servants, and the negro whom he had got from Trelawny, set sail with the body late in May and arrived in England something over a month later on June 29th. The faithful Gamba was refused passage in the vessel, but proceeded to England in another.

Hobhouse and Hanson proved Byron's will at Doctors Commons. In it there was a provision for Allegra, but no mention of her mother. Hobhouse went on the ship, and



remained by the coffin while the captain of the vessel rowed ashore for the permit to remove the body. As he waited, Byron's big Newfoundland dog crouched at his feet.

The body was taken to the house of Sir Edward Knatchbull-Huguessen on Great George Street, and there lay in state for a week in a room heavily draped in black and lit by wax candles. Hobhouse, whose duty as executor required him to identify it, was unable to do so from the once beautiful face now marred beyond recognition by death. As Trelawny had done at Missolonghi, he lifted the covering from the twisted feet and knew that it was Byron.

On its way to the Pilgrim's last resting-place in the church at the little village of Hucknall-Torkard, near Newstead Abbey, the funeral procession passed by a modest house in Kentish Town from the windows of which Mary Shelley and Mrs. Williams, who were then living together there, looked out at the passing show.

Before the funeral procession arrived at its destination, it was met in the road by a carriage containing a lady and gentleman, who learned after it had gone by whose body the hearse contained.

"What! Byron?" she screamed, and fainted.

They were Lady Caroline Lamb and her husband; and fainting was then fashionable in the best society. The women all wore tight corsets and "laced."

"On reaching my rooms at the Albany," says Hobhouse, "I found a note from Mr. Murray, telling me that he had received a note from Dr. Ireland, politely declining to allow the burial of Byron in Westminster Abbey; but it was not until the next day that, to my great surprise, I learnt on

reading the doctor's note that Mr. Murray had made the request to the Dean in my name. I thought that it had been settled that Mr. Gifford should sound the Dean of Westminster previously to any formal request being made. I wrote to Mr. Murray, asking him to inform the Dean that I had not made the request. Whether he did so I never inquired."

In accordance with his sister Augusta's wish, he was buried in the church at Hucknall-Torkard with his paternal ancestors and beside the last stormy petrel of Gight Castle, his mother; and in the chancel was erected a monument with this inscription:

"In the vault beneath,  
Where many of his ancestors and his mother are buried  
Lie the remains of  
George Gordon Noel Byron,  
Lord Byron of Rochedale,  
In the County of Lancaster,  
The author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.  
He was born in London on the  
22nd January, 1788.  
He died at Missolonghi, in Western Greece,  
on the 19th of April, 1824,  
Engaged in the glorious attempt to  
restore that country to her ancient  
freedom and renown.

---

His sister, the Honourable  
Augusta Maria Leigh,  
Placed this tablet to his Memory.

---

A very human man of many generous impulses and many faults and weaknesses had gone the common way of poor humanity.

When Moore was at Venice in 1819, he visited Byron at his nearby villa at La Mira. While there the poet gave him the manuscript of his autobiographical memoirs.

"A short time before dinner," writes Moore, "he left the room, and in a minute or two returned carrying in his hand a white leather bag. 'Look here,' he said, holding it up, 'this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I daresay, would not give sixpence for it.' 'What is it?' I asked. 'My Life and Adventures,' he answered. On hearing this I raised my hands in a gesture of wonder. 'It is not a thing,' he continued, 'that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it if you like; there, do whatever you please with it.'"

The gift pleased Moore, and he said the Memoirs would make a fine present for his little boy.

Byron wrote to Murray telling him that he had given the Memoirs to Moore.

"They are not for publication during my life, but when I am cold you may do what you please."

Moore says: "May 28, 1820.—Received a letter at last from Lord Byron through Murray, telling me he had informed Lady B. of his having given me his Memoirs for the purpose of their being published after his death, and offering her the perusal of them in case she might wish to confute any of his statements. Her note in answer to this offer (the original of which he enclosed me) is as follows:

"Kirkby Mallory, March 10, 1820.

"I received your letter of January 1st, offering for my perusal a Memoir of a part of my life. I decline to inspect

it. I consider the publication or circulation of such a composition at any time is prejudicial to Ada's future happiness. For my own sake I have no reason to shrink from publication; but notwithstanding the injuries I have suffered, I should lament more of the *consequences*.

“ ‘A. BYRON.

“ ‘To Lord Byron.’ ”

In the following December Moore received from Byron the continuation of the Memoirs, with the advice “to dispose of the reversion of the MS. now.” Moore, in need of money, sold the manuscript to Murray for 2,000 guineas, with the stipulation that he should be authorized to edit the memoirs and write the “Life of Lord Byron.” It was further agreed that Murray should have the right to publish them three months after Byron's death, unless Moore should previously have redeemed them by the repayment of the 2,000 guineas.

Lady Byron offered through Kinnaird to pay back the money and take the Memoirs, but never made good the offer. Moore objected to her having them, saying that this would be treachery to Lord Byron's intentions and wishes; but agreed that Mrs. Leigh might acquire the manuscript, “to be done with as she thought proper.” He wished the objectionable parts of it eliminated and the rest published.

About a month after Byron's death a meeting of those who were entitled to act in the matter was held in Murray's drawing room in Albemarle Street. It was a long and stormy one, and came near leading to a duel between Moore and Hobhouse, who were among the participants. Immediately after its conclusion Mrs. Leigh wrote an account of it to

her friend, the Rev. F. Hodgson, who had also been an old friend of Byron's.

"The parties, Messrs. Moore, Murray, Hobhouse, Colonel Doyle for Lady B., and Mrs. Wilmot for me, and Mr. Luttrell, a friend of Mr. Moore's, met at Mr. Murray's; and after a long dispute and nearly quarrelling, upon Mr. Wilmot stating what was my wish and opinion, the MS. was burnt, and Moore paid Murray the 2,000 guineas. Immediately almost *after* this was done, the legal agreement between Moore and Murray (which had been mislaid) was found, and strange to say, it appeared from it (what both had forgotten), that the property of the MS. was Murray's *bona fide*. Consequently *he* had the right to dispose of it as he pleased; and as he had behaved most handsomely upon the occasion . . . it was desired that he should receive the 2,000 guineas back."

But it was not Lady Byron who repaid it. Moore had borrowed the money from the Messrs. Longman, and returned to Murray, before he left the room, the sum he had received from him with interest for the time he had had it.

Murray refrained from reading the manuscript; but some of Lady Byron's friends had perused it. Their opinion, in brief, was that of Lord John Russell, who read "the greater part if not the whole," and said that some of it was too gross for publication.

The Longmans wanted Moore to write Byron's "Life" in order to get their money back. Russell opposed the whole business.

"If you write," he said to Moore, "write poetry, or if you can find a good subject, write prose; but do not undertake

to write the life of another reprobate. In short do anything but write the life of Lord Byron."

The other reprobate was Sheridan; and the political hatred for Byron, the radical, who admired the "Little Corporal" of the French Revolution and George Washington of the Revolution in America, still glowed with a red heat in the hearts of the high office-holders and opinion-molding aristocrats of England.

A great public excitement arose about the burning of the Memoirs, to which the press gave currency; and many applications were made to Murray for information about it. To an inquiry of Mr. Jerdon, editor of the *Literary Gazette*, he wrote the following answer:

"A general interest having been excited, touching the fate of Lord Byron's Memoirs, written by himself, and reports, confused and incorrect, having got into circulation on the subject, it has been deemed requisite to signify the real particulars. The manuscript of these Memoirs was purchased by Mr. Murray in the year 1821, for the sum of two thousand guineas, under certain stipulations which gave him the right of publishing them three months after his Lordship's demise. When that event was authenticated, the manuscript consequently remained at Mr. Murray's absolute disposal; and a day or two after the melancholy intelligence reached London, Mr. Murray submitted to the near connections of the family that the MS. should be destroyed. In consequence of this five persons, variously concerned in the matter, were convened upon it. As these Memoirs were not calculated to augment the fame of the writer, and as some passages were penned in a spirit which his better feel-

ings since had virtually retracted, Mr. Murray proposed that they should be destroyed, considering it a duty to sacrifice every view of profit to the noble author, by whose confidence and friendship he had been long honored. The result has been, that notwithstanding some opposition, he obtained the desired decision, and the manuscript was forthwith committed to the flames. Mr. Murray was immediately reimbursed in the purchase money by Mr. Moore, although Mr. Murray had previously renounced every claim to repayment."

After the Memoirs had been burnt, Sir Walter Scott, the big-hearted and generous, who understood Byron better than most of his English friends, wrote in his diary:

"It was a pity that nothing save the total destruction of Byron's Memoirs would satisfy his executors; but there was a reason—*premat nox alta*."

In 1825 Scott said in his "Journal:"

"On comparing notes with Moore I was confirmed in one or two points which I had always laid down in considering poor Byron. One was, that like Rousseau, he was apt to be very suspicious, and a plain downright steadiness of manner was the true mode to maintain his good opinion. Will Rose told me that once, while sitting with Byron, he fixed insensibly his eyes on his feet, one of which, it must be remembered, was deformed. Looking up suddenly, he saw Byron regarding him with a look of concentrated and deep displeasure, which wore off when he observed no consciousness or embarrassment in the countenance of Rose. Murray afterwards explained this, by telling Rose that Lord Byron was very jealous of having this personal imperfection no-

ticed or attended to. In another point, Moore confirmed my previous opinion, namely, that Byron loved mischief-making. Moore had written to him cautioning him against the project of establishing the paper called *The Liberal*, in communion with such men as P. B. Shelley and Hunt, on whom he said the world had set its mark. Byron showed this to the parties. Shelley wrote a modest and rather affecting expostulation to Moore. These two peculiarities of extreme suspicion and love of mischief are both shades of the malady which certainly tintured some part of the character of this mighty genius; and without some tendency towards which genius—I mean that kind which depends on the imaginative power—perhaps cannot exist to great extent. The wheels of a machine, to play rapidly, must not fit with the utmost exactness, else the attrition diminishes the impetus. . . . He loved to be thought awful, mysterious and gloomy, and sometimes hinted at strange causes. I believe the whole to have been the creation and sport of a wild and powerful fancy.”

The greatest literary tragedy of the century had been wrought in this wholesale holocaust of the Memoirs, more sensational and startling even than the burning of Shelley’s body on the seashore of the Bay of Spezzia; and there was no Trelawny present to snatch from the consuming blaze the heart of those pages that might have shown beyond the cavil of the Mrs. Stowes and the Lord Lovelaces the truth about Byron’s separation from his wife and its connection with the romance of Clare Clairmont and Allegra.



## XXIX

### EXEUNT OMNES

THE play is ended and the curtain falls. Of the minor actors, some made their exits early; others late.

The gay and irresponsible Lady Caroline Lamb, who was believed to have circulated the scandalous story about Byron and his sister, succumbed a few years after his death, in her forty-second year, to the unromantic disease of dropsy.

Mary Shelley, whom Clare in her old age at Florence described as "prim and proper," lived to see the little Florence Percy become Sir Florence Percy Shelley, and died in London in February, 1851, leaving behind her a distinguished and lasting reputation as the author of *Frankenstein*—a strange story with an elder brother's likeness to Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." She was buried in Bournemouth churchyard. Clare painted her character in the statement that she "always had a great respect for Mrs. Grundy."

Godwin, whose *Political Justice* Clare wrote to Mary from Dresden in March, 1831, she was reading again, "with admiration at the vastness of the plan and the clearness and skill, nothing less than immortal, with which it is executed," died in 1836, at the age of eighty, after a career of debt and anxiety which he bore with philosophic fortitude.

Thomas Jefferson Hogg became a barrister and, achieving a

successful practice in England, married Jane Williams, widow of Shelley's friend, who perished with him in the *Ariel*.

By Sir Timothy Shelley's death in 1844, the Hunts, to whom Shelley had bequeathed a substantial sum, were put in comparatively easy circumstances. Hunt with his wife and brood of "little Hottentots," after lingering awhile in the neighborhood of Florence, went back to England, where he wrote and published his *Recollections of Lord Byron* and a number of other books, including his own autobiography, and edited *The Companion*, *The Tatler*, *The London Journal*, and *The Reflector*. He was burlesqued as "Harold Skimpole" by Dickens in *Bleak House*, a characterization which the novelist afterwards deeply regretted. Of it Dickens later wrote: "Exactly those graces and charms of manner which are remembered in the words we have quoted, were remembered by the author of the work of fiction in question when he drew the character in question. He no more thought, God forgive him! that the admired original would ever be charged with the imaginary vices of the fictitious creature than he has himself ever thought of charging the blood of Desdemona and Othello on the innocent Academy model who sat for Iago's leg in the picture."

The boring and blundering Thomas Medwin published, in 1824, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, noted during a residence of his Lordship at Pisa in 1821-1822; and when, upon the appearance of this work, the critics jumped on him, he gave to the world in 1825 *Captain Medwin Vindicated from the Calumnies of the Reviewers*; and in 1833 he published *The Shelley Papers*. He is saved from obscurity by these printed memorials of his associations with the two poets.

Stanhope became the Earl of Harrington, and with nothing further to mark him as different from many insignificant Dukes and Earls and Lords of his day save the story of the time when he belonged to the Greek Committee and was with Byron at Cephallonia and Missolonghi, died and passed on to the dull oblivion that is common to ordinary humanity.

Little Dr. Bruno, who went to England with Byron's body, and attended the funeral at Hucknall-Torkard, magnanimously refused to accept any compensation for the devoted and unselfish services he had rendered his distinguished patient, and, dying, dropped out of men's memories.

Pietro Gamba, to whom Byron was attached for his loyalty and affection, and who was as devoted to him as was any one of his faithful dogs, assisted Hobhouse in England in settling his estate, and went back to Italy. Thence he returned to Greece and became a Colonel in the Greek army. In 1827 he was carried off by typhoid fever, and was buried in a fort on the isthmus of Aletamna. Fort and grave alike have disappeared, and the handsome young fellow is remembered only as Teresa's brother and Byron's faithful friend.

Of the later career of the Pilgrim's blonde Countess, Teresa, the story is not so pleasing. She went back to the senile old husband whom she had betrayed, and was taken again to his bosom with the credulous fondness of forgiving age. After his departure from a life that illustrated what a fool is an impotent old man who marries a very young and handsome and passionate girl in a land where moonlight and youth are associated with love and beauty, she forgot him in her later union with the Marquis de Boissy, peer of France under Louis Philippe and senator of the Second Empire. De

Boissy was very rich and very eccentric; and being old, like his predecessor, was also like him fatuous. She prided herself on her associations with Byron, and kept his portrait in her salon at Paris, where her new Marquis was accustomed to present her to his friends as "Madame la Marquise de Boissy, my wife, former mistress of Lord Byron." After the exit of the Lord Marquis, she went to Florence, and like so many others who had known him, published, in 1868, a book about her *cavalier serviente*, and died in March, 1873, famous only as his last lady-love.

His other Countess, Lady Marguerite Blessington, with whom he parted after a brief association that was both on her part and his impeccable, and whose early departure precluded the usual love-affair and consequent boring that inevitably concluded his "passions," found herself again a widow upon the death of the immaculate and most respectable Lord Blessington in Paris in 1829. On her return to London her house became a center for social "swells" and intellectuals, and was said to be "the rival of Holland House as the resort of the learned, the witty, and the famous of the day."

An American writer of the period, who "dearly loved a Lord," has left an account of her as he saw her in her surroundings at Seamore Place, where she then lived.

"In a long library, lined alternately with splendidly bound books and mirrors, and with a deep window of the breadth of the room, opening upon Hyde Park, I found Lady Blessington alone. The picture, to my eye, as the door opened, was a very lovely one—a woman of remarkable beauty, half buried in a fauteuil of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp suspended from the center of the arched ceiling; sofas,

couches, ottomans, and busts arranged in a rather crowded sumptuousness through the room; enamel tables, covered with expensive and elegant trifles in every corner, and a delicate white hand relieved on the back of a book, to which the eye was attracted by the blaze of its diamond rings. As the servant mentioned my name, she rose and gave me her hand very cordially; and a gentleman entering immediately after, she presented me to Count D'Orsay, the well-known Pelham of London, and certainly the most splendid specimen of a man and a well-dressed one, that I had ever seen. Tea was brought in immediately, and conversation went swimmingly on."

The charming Irish Countess, who escaped the poet's conquest, has left a delightful book about him in her *Conversations*, not the least interesting item of which is his statement to her that "the belief in the immortality of the soul is the only panacea for the ills of life." Yet she records no assertion by him that he entertained such a belief.

Byron's generosity and kindness to his servants and retainers were proverbial, and usually met with the return which they merited. There was no one of them all to whom he was more attached, or who loved him with a more dog-like devotion than his old valet from the Newstead Abbey days to the day of his death, whom he facetiously and affectionately called "the learned Fletcher." Fletcher had been bitterly opposed to his master's going to Greece; and Trelawny gives an amusing account of his description, within Byron's hearing, of Greece and its inhabitants.

"'Why,' inquired Captain Scott, sipping his grog with Fletcher in the gangway, 'is your master going to such a wild country of savages? What may the country be like?'"

Fletcher said: "‘Bless you! there is very little country; it’s all rocks and robbers. They live in holes in the rocks and come out like foxes; they have long guns, pistols and knives. The Turks were the only respectable people in the country. If they go, Greece will be like Bedlam broke loose. It’s a land of flies and lice and fleas and thieves. What my lord is going there for the Lord only knows, I don’t.’"

Trelawny adds that Byron agreed that he did not know what he was going for. "I was tired of Italy and liked Greece, and the London Committee told me I should be of use, but of what use they did not say, nor do I see."

The Cornishman’s comment was: "We shall have excitement; the greatest of all—fighting."

After accompanying Byron’s body back to London, Fletcher was financially assisted by Hobhouse and by Mrs. Leigh; and he was at one time in prison for debt. He survived his master several years; and is said to have been buried near Byron’s resting place, in the churchyard of Hucknall-Torkard.

In bold relief against the Italian and Greek skies of the Pilgrim’s later years stands out the figure of Edward John Trelawny. After Shelley he was the most picturesque personage in the Human Comedy of the two great poets. "Well born and well bred and athletic," says one of Byron’s biographers of him, "a man of strong eyes, beetling brows, fine aquiline profile and heavy dark moustache, Trelawny had the air of distinction and the show of adventurous capacity that never failed to command the respect of the poet."

In his earlier life a wanderer, adventurer and fighter on the face of the waters, the companion and associate of outcasts, adventurers, and wanderers like himself, he came to

be, while yet in his youthful prime, the intimate of two of the greatest English poets of his generation. Sometimes illiterate in his orthography and as reckless in his spelling as he was daring in his adventures, he left behind him in his *Recollections of a Younger Son* one of the most vivid and entertaining autobiographical narratives in the language. A lover of women, and beloved by them, whether they were semi-barbarian or of the greatest culture and refinement, he wedded and cared for tenderly until her tragic death a young half-breed girl of one of the Indian islands. After Byron's exit at Missolonghi, regarding the Greek leader, Mavrocordato, as a "weak, imbecile and cowardly being," he espoused the cause of another and wilder chieftain, Odysseus, went over to the Turks with him, and was besieged in a cave on Mt. Parnassus, where Odysseus, whose young sister he married, had hidden his family and his possessions. Here he was treacherously shot in the back by two Englishmen employed by the Greek government for the purpose; and finally through the good offices of Hobhouse, was rescued after lying ill for several weeks in the cavern. He then went to Cephallonia, and thence to Zante, taking his young wife with him. He wrote to Mary Shelley from Zante in October, 1827, about the death of Odysseus, who had been captured by the Greeks and thrown from the Acropolis at Athens.

"Since the death of Odysseus, for whom I had the sincerest friendship, I have felt no private interest for any one in this country. The Egyptian fleet and part of the Turkish amounting to some hundred sail, including transports, have been totally destroyed by the united squadron of England, France and Russia in the harbor of Navarino; so we soon expect to

see a portion of Greece wrested from the Turks, and something definitely arranged for the benefit of the Greeks."

He quarreled with his wife, sent her to a convent, and returned to Cornwall. In March, 1829, he was again in Florence, and Mary Shelley writes to him, with a memory of his kindness and an affection for him that she never lost:

"If Clare and I were either to die or marry, you would be left without a *Dulcinea*, except the six score new objects you may have found among the pretty girls in Florence."

Here he visited Landor who, he told Mary, had promised to help him with the book that he was writing about Shelley. In 1833 he came to America, and on his return to England lived for a while in London, where he was lionized by the social world for his own engaging personality and for his associations with Byron.

Millais painted him in his old age in his picture of "The North West Passage," in the Tate Gallery, depicting "in the ashen color of the face the rough gray hair and beard, the hard clear aquiline profile, and the strong masterful searching gray eye," a likeness very different from that of the Oriental countenance and flowing mustache and long black locks which had caught the romantic fancy of Mary Shelley and Clare, when they first saw him at Pisa in the days when they were all young.

He died at the village of Sompting near Worthing in England in August, 1881, in his eighty-ninth year; and the ashes of his cremated body were taken to the Eternal City and placed in the tomb that he had years before prepared for them, next to that of Shelley, hard by the Pyramid of Caius Cestius under the Roman wall.